

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF
SOUTH AFRICA.

No. 3 / 4287

OFFICE OR INDIVIDUAL

From

Rev. M. Rogers,
Tristan da Cunha.

1922

16th. September.

SUBJECT

Tristan da Cunha

Desire of inhabitants that jurisdiction over the island be transferred from that of the Colonial Office to that of the Union of South Africa.

PREVIOUS PAPERS

3/3658

MINUTES

See:

Various attempts have been made from time to time to provide for the future of these islands but have come to nothing. I don't think there is the least hope of the Union taking over the island which is of no value to anyone but I suppose we had better get their views on this subject before referring it to the Govt.

R.S.

29/23.

Mr. S. Dublin will visit the island in March next. (See 2/1829)

Bring up before Mr. Dublin's visit in order that reply to this letter may be sent by that boat. 29/23.
R.

SUBSEQUENT PAPERS

3/4317

No. 3 / 4287

See 2/1829 Cause of N. M. S. Dublin
for Tristan da Cunha

22-1-23 in minutes.

suggested to Ministers of South African Government by Mr Joseph Chamberlain (as Colonial Secretary) in a letter dated July 24 1903 see Blue Book 1906 (Cd 3095), from which it appears that such a suggestion had previously been made and was considered reasonable. The inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha consider that with a modicum of Government assistance and advice this might become a prosperous and self supporting Colony.

They beg, Sir, that you will bring this letter to the notice of South African Ministers and or with their concurrence of the Secretary of State for the British Colonies.

On behalf of the inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha

Yours faithfully
 H. Martyn Rogers
 Missionary on Tristan da Cunha

To his Excellency
 The Governor General
 of the Union of South Africa

which will amount to 200 or more by natural growth in a few years, that in the interests of decency, law and order, there should be some sort of resident administrative official with civil powers. The people are law abiding folk, but have no central authority or leadership whatever save a chance missionary, a possibility of serious trouble lies here. The inhabitants therefore consider it desirable that if possible the jurisdiction over the islands be transferred from the British Colonial Office to that of the Union of South Africa.

I would emphasize that there is no desire of the inhabitants for removal to the mainland or elsewhere as they do not consider themselves fit for the strenuous competition by education or habit, and they are much attached to their island which they regard as home, and again they possess no capital for a start elsewhere.

I would point out for your information that a proposal for the annexation of these islands by South Africa was

and neglected state of this isolated British Colony (many of its inhabitants are of Dutch extraction through Peter Green a Netherlands born man) I trust that in the interests of our common humanity the proposal seriously put forward hereinafter for the Annexation of these islands by the Union of South Africa may have Your Excellency's ^{careful} serious consideration and sympathetic interest.

The inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha would point out that as their islands are geographically part of South Africa, and from their situation well fitted to be of value to the Union of South Africa, supposing for instance a Wireless Meteorological Station were established here to convey storm warnings for the benefit of South African Farmers, the annexation of the Colony is desirable.

The fact that many former families once resident here are now resident at the Cape forms an additional tie with South Africa.

It would also seem desirable that at this stage, in view of the growth of population

This island formerly exported butter, cheese, and eggs.

The people live now by eating young sea birds and their eggs, but consequently these (as seals and whales have done) are leaving the islands or being so reduced in numbers as soon to be likely to cease to be available. Also as the receipt of charity aid from Missionary Societies and private persons depended on the Annual Mail (or warship) there is now always the difficulty of procuring adequate supplies of clothing for the population and medical necessities.

Again in the absence of machine tools and agricultural implements of the simplest order and seeds, the Colony is in difficulties over all public works, roads, housing, sanitation and farming operations.

The men here all return their occupation not as fishermen, but as farmers and stockbreeders, and I hope a knowledge of this fact might win for us the sympathy of the South African Agricultural Community.

In view therefore of the unfortunate

eggs, fish, and curio's are in great straits.

In the absence of trading facilities there is a check to production, and what is worse a serious shortage of stores necessary to existence of a serious and alarming nature. It is no exaggeration of truth to assert that the entire population during the long winter season is always on the verge of famine. Should the potato crop fail owing to excessive rain & cold winds, and this because the fishing depends on the weather, and the boats which cannot be repaired without stores, it is most probable the Colony would be depopulated by famine and disease before communication could be established with the outer world and relief obtained.

The amount of live stock on the islands has much decreased since the former Missionary the Rev J.G. Barrow and his wife resided here owing to bad seasons and the poor quality of grass of pasture. Goats and rabbits and hucks have died out entirely, the number of milch cows is now so small that many families have no cow and there is no milk in the winter.

No. 27.....of 2 February 1923

Tristan da Cunha
South Atlantic.16 Sept^r 1922

RECD. C. G. O.

3/4257

Sir,

On behalf of the inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha I desire to call your attention to the difficulties in the conditions of life in the Colony which now amounts to 130 souls, and increases at the rate of 10 annually. Owing to the withdrawal of the British Admiralty concession of a yearly visit from a warship, the changes in sealing and whaling industries so that these vessels rarely touch now at Tristan, and the fact that the islands lie south of the usual steamer routes, communication with the outer world is seldom and irregular and after dangerously long intervals.

The Colonists in consequence mainly of the irregularity of Mails, and the resultant impossibility of trading such things as the island produces, viz:- fresh meat and vegetables, knitted goods.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
CAPE TOWN.



27 January 1922

MINUTE NO. 3/4287.

16th September
1922.

The Governor-General transmits to Ministers the accompanying copy of a letter which has received from the Reverend H. Martyn Rogers, missionary on Tristan da Cunha, with regard to the future of the inhabitants of that island. The Governor-General would be glad to receive an expression of Ministers' views on Mr. Rogers' proposals before referring the matter to the Council of State for the Colonies.

(Sgd.) ARTHUR FREY

GOVERNOR-GEN

only
the
Lucas,
led goods.