

FURTHER PAPERS RELATIVE TO

*Objection.**Answer.*

Melbourne in the same position as the other Colonies. But it is at this point that the "incidence of payment" steps in. The Northern Colonies are asked to contribute to the establishment of this fortnightly mail *via* King George's Sound, at a greatly increased expense, and in the same proportion as if they also received a corresponding benefit; and to ensure their compliance with this request, it is recommended that they shall be subjected to a little "gentle pressure" in the shape of increased postage.

His Grace lays great stress upon the necessity of considering this question from an economical point of view only.

This creates some little surprise in the minds of the Colonists, when they recall the very liberal provision the Imperial Government has hitherto made for mail contracts to foreign countries, and to other British Colonies, the exclusive burthen of which has been borne by herself. The Colonists do not complain at being required to bear a portion of this burthen, even to the extent of so large a share as a moiety, although such a payment constitutes a very heavy pressure upon their slender resources. His Grace relies upon the table of relative expenditure attached to his report, which, although not assumed to be strictly accurate, is yet presumed to present a fair statement of the probable expenditure required to carry out the various proposals. This document appears to have been drawn up to contravene a statement of Mr. Verdon, the late Treasurer of Victoria, that the expense of a fortnightly mail *via* Suez would cost Victoria £120,000 if she was left to pay the whole of the Australian subsidy. Drawn up for a special purpose, it may be expected to contain errors, which indeed abound to an extent which will convey quite erroneous impressions. This table estimates the cost of a service twice a month *via* Suez (King George's Sound) at £277,388, of which the amount supposed to be contributed by this Colony is set down at £17,384, and by Queensland, £12,956. Now as, under the arrangement at present in force for a four-weekly mail at an expense of £179,114, the amounts allotted respectively are, to this Colony £21,360, and to Queensland £12,425, it is difficult to imagine that these figures can be relied upon, because, if correct, Sydney is supposed to receive a double service at a diminution of charge of £3,976, while Queensland receives the same advantage for the slight increase of £531. In the same document the expense of a service from Singapore to Brisbane is estimated at £90,000.

We are left to conjecture from what data this estimate is derived; but that it is considerably overrated is evident, from the fact that tenders for the performance of the service had been sent in to the Government of Queensland. The first of these undertakes to perform a monthly service between Sydney and Singapore, at the mileage rate of 10s. 6d. per nautical mile, at an average speed of eleven knots an hour to the measured mile.

The second tender is to perform the monthly service between Singapore and Brisbane at an average speed of nine knots, for the sum of £43,000, or if extended to Sydney £45,000, per annum.

The third tender is to perform the monthly service between Batavia and Sydney, calling both ways at Brisbane, Macassar, Cape York, and Port Denison, for the sum of £30,000 per annum, the average speed to be ten knots, and the voyage to be performed in seventeen days.