

PAPERS

RELATIVE TO THE

TORRES STRAITS MAIL SERVICE.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, BY COMMAND OF
HIS EXCELLENCY.

WELLINGTON.

—
1870.

PAPERS RESPECTING A PROPOSED STEAM MAIL SERVICE BETWEEN NEW ZEALAND AND ENGLAND VIA QUEENSLAND AND TORRES STRAITS.

No. 1.

MEMORANDUM from the Hon. R. TOOTH, M.L.C., Sydney.

Proposed new Postal Service—New Zealand and England via Queensland.

ADVANTAGES :—

1. Torres Straits offers the most direct route to England.
2. Opens a direct trade with Queensland, which country is producing sugar which would be exchanged for cereals grown in New Zealand. Queensland produces little or no grain excepting maize.
3. Opens a direct communication with India, China, and all other ports in the East, which countries would supply produce also in exchange.
4. Direct and speedy communication with Queensland and the East would offer inducements to Europeans to settle in New Zealand for the sake of climate.
5. Vessels of very moderate power would perform the service to Singapore, to join the P. and O. Company's boats, similar to the "Tararua" and "Rangitoto," coaling stations being within easy distance all the way.
6. Queensland would be in the direct route, and all the ports in New Zealand would have the benefit of the most direct and quickest route with the Mother Country.
7. The winter passage *via* Cape Leuwin is most tempestuous, and requires powerful boats to do the service; whereas by the proposed route good steaming weather almost always prevails.
8. Queensland would join New Zealand in the subsidy, and the advantage would be direct trade with a large population that must of necessity look to a grain-growing country for supplies, which at present are received from Adelaide and California through Sydney.
9. The whole of the Colonies would enjoy the advantage of a bi-monthly communication, as there would be one service by Melbourne and the Bluff, and the proposed one *via* Manukau and Wellington, giving each port equal advantages.
10. Coals can be supplied in Queensland and along the proposed line.
11. Three steamers would do the whole service.
12. The route proposed to New Zealand *via* Torres Straits would deliver all the Australian mails at Queensland, from which place the other Australian Colonies would make their own arrangements, and place New Zealand in a better position than the existing contract, the distance between Queensland and New Zealand being less than from Melbourne.
13. It avoids all the risks and inconveniences of a long sea voyage without coaling ports, the distances by this route not occupying more than seven days from port to port.
14. Queensland and New Zealand supplying the class of boats proposed would prevent any extravagant subsidy being required, and they could make arrangements with the other Colonies for their share in the mails brought by this service.
15. No port in New Zealand could complain, as, by one service, Auckland would be the first point of arrival, and it could then be arranged to make Dunedin the first point of arrival *via* Melbourne.
16. A line of steamers is running between China and San Francisco, so that this line being open New Zealand would have steam communication with any part of the world.
17. Between April and September vessels seeking freight in the East always go by this route—Torres Straits.

R. TOOTH.

No. 2.

The Hon. E. W. STAFFORD to the Hon. R. TOOTH.

SIR,—

Colonial Secretary's Office, Wellington, 12th May, 1869.

With reference to some notes forwarded by you to His Excellency Sir G. F. Bowen, respecting a proposed new Postal Service between New Zealand and England *via* Queensland and Torres Straits, I have the honor to state that a copy of your Memorandum will be laid before the New Zealand Parliament, but I am unable to hold out any prospect of this Colony contributing at present towards the proposed service.

The Hon. R. Tooth, Esq., M.L.C., Sydney.

I have, &c.,

E. W. STAFFORD.

No. 3.

The Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY, Queensland, to the Hon. E. W. STAFFORD.

(No. 104.)

SIR,—

Colonial Secretary's Office, Brisbane, 2nd June, 1869.

I have the honor to forward to you copy of a Memorandum from the Hon. the Postmaster-General, together with copy of a minute of the proceedings of the Executive Council on the 19th ultimo, also copy of a letter from Mr. George Raff, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, with Resolution annexed, which was adopted at a public meeting held in the city on the 10th ultimo, on

the subject of certain information supplied by Mr. Robert Tooth, intimating a wish on the part of your Government to unite with the Government of this Colony in carrying out a monthly Mail Service with Great Britain *via* Torres Straits.

I desire, on the part of the Queensland Government, to inform you that a very strong feeling exists, which has extended itself to Members of both Houses of the Legislature, to co-operate heartily with your Colony in carrying out the Postal Service, and of opening up negotiations without delay. And I request that you will be good enough to favour me with the views of your Government upon this all-important subject.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary,
New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

ARTHUR HODGSON,
Colonial Secretary.

Enclosure 1 in No. 3.

Copy of MINUTE of PROCEEDINGS of the EXECUTIVE COUNCIL on 19th May, 1869.

Re MAIL SERVICE *via* TORRES STRAITS.

THE Hon. the Vice-President, at the instance of the Hon. the Postmaster-General, submits for the consideration of the Council a letter from Mr. George Raff, dated 14th instant, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce at Brisbane, forwarding copy of a Resolution adopted at a meeting held on the 10th instant, and requesting the Government to give effect to it by inviting an expression of opinion from the Government of New Zealand in reference to the adoption of the Torres Straits route as the best means of supplying the Australian Colonies and New Zealand with a suitable foreign monthly service, which, by alternating with the service *via* King George's Sound, would thus secure a fortnightly mail.

The Council deliberate.

They advise that Mr. Raff's letter, with the recommendations thereon of the Hon. the Postmaster-General, be forwarded to the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, so that the Government of New Zealand may be communicated with.

The Hon. the Postmaster-General, Brisbane.

A. V. DEURY,
Clerk of the Council.

Enclosure 2 in No. 3.

Mr. G. RAFF to the Hon. the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Queensland.

Brisbane Chamber of Commerce,

SIR,—

Brisbane, 14th May, 1869.

As the matter has already had your attention, I consider that in fulfilling the duty imposed upon me by the Resolution passed at the meeting held in this Chamber on the 10th instant, to hear and consider the statement of Mr. Tooth, regarding the wish of the Government of New Zealand to unite with the Government of this Colony in an endeavour to arrange for a Mail Service by way of Torres Straits, it will only be necessary for me to refer you to the Resolution annexed, and to request that you will take the action suggested.

I have, &c.,

GEO. RAFF,
Chairman.

The Hon. the Postmaster-General.

"That, acting on the information supplied by Mr. Tooth, the Chairman of this meeting be requested to communicate with the Government, with a view to opening negotiations with the Colony of New Zealand for the purpose of establishing steam mail communication *via* Torres Straits."

Enclosure 3 in No. 3.

MR. GEORGE RAFF, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce at Brisbane, in forwarding copy of a Resolution adopted at a meeting held on the 10th instant, has requested the Government to give effect to it, by inviting an expression of opinion from the Government of New Zealand in reference to the adoption of the Torres Straits route as the best means of supplying the Australian Colonies and New Zealand with a suitable foreign monthly service, which, by alternating with the service *via* King George's Sound, would thus secure a fortnightly service.

Mr. Raff, in common with the members of the Chamber of Commerce, and the other influential gentlemen who appear to have attended at the meeting referred to, has been led to believe that the New Zealand Government would not be indisposed, at the present time, to entertain propositions for the purpose of giving effect to this project, which for many years has been favourably entertained by the inhabitants of the settlements on the eastern shores of Australia. The experimental service conducted by the Government of Queensland in 1866 sufficiently demonstrated the safety and practicability of this route, under circumstances of an exceptional character, and there cannot now be any reasonable doubt that, for northern Queensland at any rate, it would provide the quickest mail communication with the United Kingdom and foreign countries.

The discontinuance of the mail route *via* Panama, and the unfortunate disregard shown by the Imperial Government to the recommendations of the Government of New Zealand and the other Australian Colonies, as embodied in the proceedings of the Conference held in Melbourne in March 1867, seem to render it by no means improbable that the Government of New Zealand may now be willing to co-operate with the Government of Queensland in establishing a mail service *via* Singapore.

The tenders which have already been received in reply to an advertisement bearing date 17th January, 1867, may prove some guide in forming an estimate of the probable expenditure. The distance from Auckland to Brisbane is much the same as between Sydney and Auckland; and it is believed that in addition to the advantage of obtaining a regular mail service at a moderate rate *via* Singapore.

the opportunity thus afforded for the exchange of commodities between Colonies of such varied resources as those of New Zealand and Queensland, would be greatly facilitated by the direct communication which would thereby be promoted.

The New Zealand Government have already shown a desire to promote the interchange of Colonial productions, by proposals which are now under consideration; and though it is to be regretted that the Government of Queensland will not, in all probability, be represented at the approaching Intercolonial Conference to be held at Sydney, it may with some confidence be anticipated that the Governments of the two Colonies, influenced as they are by a desire to promote the interests of the inhabitants of their respective Provinces, will be found willing to confer with one another in such subjects as these, in which they are both vitally interested.

Dependent as the Government of Queensland is at present upon the arrangements made by the Imperial Government with the approval of the older Southern Colonies of Australia, I could not recommend the adoption of a policy which might prematurely disturb our existing postal arrangements.

Should, however, the New Zealand Government be prepared to share with the Government of Queensland the cost of a mail service *via* Torres Straits, I would recommend that this Government should throw the whole weight of its influence into the adoption of the Torres Straits route, and that it should thereupon give notice of discontinuing its contributions to the service *via* King George's Sound.

J. DOUGLAS.

General Post Office, 14th May, 1869.

No. 4.

The Hon. W. GISBORNE to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY, Queensland.

SIR,— Colonial Secretary's Office, Wellington, 21st September, 1869.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, enclosing Memorandum of the Hon. the Postmaster-General, together with a copy of minute of proceedings of the Executive Council, and other enclosures.

I regret that, owing to the papers having been laid before a Select Committee of the House of Representatives, which was sitting when they were received, an earlier reply was neglected to be sent.

You refer in your letter to "certain information supplied by Mr. Robert Tooth, intimating a wish on the part of the your Government to unite with the Government of this Colony in carrying out a monthly mail service with Great Britain *via* Torres Straits." It would, as far as I am aware of the circumstances, be more correct to say that Mr. Tooth led the Government of this Colony to suppose that it was your Government which desired its co-operation in establishing the Torres Straits route. The difference would be unimportant, excepting that it leads me to the explanation that this Government is without any information concerning the Torres Straits route, especially in regard to the probable cost. In the absence of such information, there was very little to submit to the Assembly.

It is therefore not to be wondered at that, with no precise offer made by your Government, and with no knowledge, of even an approximate character, of the probable cost of the service, the Select Committee of the House of Representatives did not report favourably on the subject. Subsequently, the House of Representatives passed the enclosed Resolutions, from which you will perceive that, without specific reference to the Torres Straits route, the House expressed itself favourably to the San Francisco Service. The Torres Straits proposal, as far as this Colony is concerned, is therefore closed for the present, but I do not think that therefore it should be entirely lost sight of. If your Government would take steps to arrive at a conclusion concerning the cost of the service, its speed, and other details, and upon them make a distinct offer to this Colony, the Government, if the cost were reasonable, might see its way, especially if the San Francisco negotiations prove unfavourable, to recommending the acceptance of the offer to the Assembly. I am strongly of opinion that if any practical result is to come from the proposals, it would be preferable that your Government should enter into the contract, and make a subsidiary agreement with this Colony, than that the Colonies should jointly contract.

I have, &c.,

W. GISBORNE.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Queensland.

P.S.—Since writing the above, my attention has been drawn to a series of Resolutions agreed to apparently between the New South Wales and Queensland Governments, on the subject of steam communication with Europe *via* Torres Straits. It would be premature to discuss this new phase of the question until I receive a communication from you respecting it—especially so, as the whole subject of the Ocean Steam Postal Service is to be submitted to the consideration of the Conference to be held in Sydney next month.

W. GISBORNE.
