

FURTHER PAPERS RELATIVE TO A TORRES STRAITS MAIL SERVICE.

No. 1.

The Hon. A. H. PALMER to the Hon. W. GISBORNE.

SIR,—

Colonial Secretary's Office, Brisbane, 14th May, 1872.

I have the honor to bring under the notice of your Government that a resolution has been adopted by both Houses of the Parliament of Queensland, in its present Session, that the present postal arrangements of this Colony with Great Britain are considered unsatisfactory, and that this Government be empowered to make arrangements for establishing steam communication by way of Java, at an annual cost to the Colony not exceeding the sum of £25,000; and that they be also authorized to negotiate with the Governments of the neighbouring Colonies, with the view of obtaining their concurrence and assistance in subsidizing the line.

I have now the honor to forward to you copies of these resolutions, and of former papers and correspondence in respect of the proposed mail service, which have been laid before both Houses of Parliament; also, copy of a letter of this date to the Government of New South Wales, on the same subject, to which your attention is invited. Not published.
Enclosure to this letter.

I am also in communication with the other Colonies interested, and hopes are entertained of securing their prompt co-operation; and, in the meantime, I should be glad to have, at your earliest convenience, an intimation of the views of your Government on the subject.

I have, &c.,

A. H. PALMER,

Colonial Secretary.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, New Zealand.

Enclosure in No. 1.

The Hon. A. H. PALMER to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY, New South Wales.

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Colonial Secretary's Office, Brisbane, 14th May, 1872.

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I have now the honor to forward to you a copy of these resolutions, also copy of the printed Parliamentary papers respecting a proposed mail steam service between Sydney and Batavia, *via* Queensland and Torres Straits; and I beg to invite your special attention to a letter, No. 7, forming part of the correspondence, addressed by me on 14th October, 1871, in behalf of this Government, to the Colonial Secretary at that time of your Colony, on the subject of the co-operation sought for of New South Wales and Victoria in the proposed service.

This letter failed to elicit any reply, and no further action was taken in the matter at that time.

A strong feeling, however, now exists, both inside and outside the House, in favour of the Torres Straits route; and I trust that you will be good enough to furnish me with the views of your Government on this very important question, at your earliest convenience.

The advantages possessed by this route—in facility of communication with England—in opening a direct trade, through Batavia, with India, China, and the East, and the adaptation of ships of comparatively moderate power for the performance of the service—have been so frequently discussed, and brought before the public in such a prominent manner, that it is hardly necessary to repeat them here; whilst the experimental service conducted by this Government, in 1866, under very disadvantageous circumstances, has sufficiently demonstrated the safety and practicability of the route, which is eminently calculated to bring the several Australian Colonies into close connection with each other; and would also prove of the utmost service in connection with the direct telegraphic communication proposed to be established between Europe and Queensland, by way of Java, in the benefits of which all the Australian Colonies would participate.

In the experimental service in 1866, between Brisbane and Batavia, five trips each way were made, at a total cost of £27,881, towards which the sum of £6,362 was contributed by the Netherlands East India Government.

The proposed service between Sydney and Batavia is to consist of thirteen trips each way annually, and the subsidy required to establish and maintain it is £35,000, of which the Government of Netherlands India have consented to contribute £10,000, conditionally upon the Colonial Governments of Australia providing the balance of £25,000; and I must again urge upon you the necessity of coming to a speedy decision in the matter, in order that the opportunity of making such a satisfactory arrangement as the one now offered may not be lost.

The first vessel employed in the service of 1866 was the "Souchays," which was afterwards replaced by the "Hero." Neither of these vessels was especially adapted for the service they were called upon