

certainly. This method of providing for the necessities of the service by means of subsidized companies is still adhered to at the other end of the line between Sydney and San Francisco. But the advantage gained thereby is manifestly imperilled by the proposed abandonment of the system of subsidies at this end of the line between England and America, and the substitution of a system of monthly tenders. The inconsistency of the two systems need not be pointed out as likely to lead to inconvenience. And one result of this new arrangement is that it appears or that it has been found necessary to alter the days of departure from England, which amounts, in fact, not only to an alteration but to a practical abandonment of the time table at certain points of the line. The two days submitted to the two Agents-General for the colonies concerned by the Postal Authorities, and to which our choice is limited, we consider inconvenient days for the purpose. But the mere alteration of days is not the worst feature of the new arrangement, which appears to me to consist in the indefiniteness which must now hang about the future periods of departure of these mails from England and San Francisco throughout the year, which renders it next to impossible for the Governments concerned to indicate beforehand a time table which can be relied on for any definite period. This feature I am compelled to regard as at least a departure from the original arrangement, such as cannot but seriously affect the efficiency and popularity of the service. Nor, indeed, can I conceive how the objection upon this score is to be obviated otherwise than by a return to the former system of subsidies, or by some equivalent system not inconsistent with that which prevails at the other end of the line.

If Saturday be adhered to as the day of departure—and although this will under the circumstances be always doubtful,—no better day other than Thursday has been suggested or can be guaranteed—in that case the position in which the public and the colonies at the other end of the line would be placed by the new arrangement is further aggravated by the fact that one of its consequences would be to add four days to the time occupied by the carriage of mails between England and San Francisco. The additional four days would be caused by the delay from Thursday to Saturday, and by the difference in the time of transit, estimated at two days, between the rate of a fast Thursday and a slow Saturday steamer. Nor is it a point unworthy of consideration that this increment of the time of carriage must reduce the period for stopping in Sydney, so as to render it almost impossible, in the reduced limits of time available, to provide for stopping at or for any carriage of mails from Fiji, to which the Imperial Government appear to attach considerable importance.

So far, then, from assenting to the alteration proposed, I feel it my duty respectfully to protest against it so far as any protest of mine can be made available.

WILLIAM FORSTER,
Agent-General for New South Wales.

Sub-Enclosure 2 to Enclosure 1 in No. 162.

Sir JULIUS VOGEL'S MEMORANDUM.

Memorandum for the consideration of the Secretary of State concerning certain Changes made by the Post Office in the Date and Mode of Despatch of the Australasian Mails via San Francisco.

1. The Colonies of New South Wales and New Zealand have jointly established a very efficient mail service between San Francisco, New Zealand, and New South Wales. The Colony of Fiji has hitherto been taken *en route*. Although in the change which it is proposed to make the steamers would not call at Fiji, there is little doubt but that by branch steamers the service will be made available to Fiji.

2. Before the contract was entered into, the Imperial Government, through the Secretary of State (see copy of telegram subjoined), agreed with the Governments of the Colonies of Australia and New Zealand, to carry the mails between London and San Francisco, London and Galle, and London and Singapore, free of charge, leaving the colonies to provide services between their own ports and Galle, San Francisco, and Singapore, respectively.

3. In pursuance of this undertaking, the service between San Francisco and the colonies was established by the Governments of New South Wales and New Zealand, and arrangements were entered into with the General Post Office to make up the mails every fourth Thursday, in order that they might be transmitted to New York by the steamers leaving Queenstown on Fridays.

4. Without any previous announcement to the colonies or their representatives, the General Post Office has entered into entirely different arrangements for the transmission of the mails to the United States. After the change was effected, the representatives of the two colonies were told that it was an accomplished fact; that the mails could not be carried for the ensuing month, January, in the usual way, but that one of three boats leaving on different days must be selected; that in future the Post Office would only arrange month by month for the carriage of mails to New York during the next month; and that for January it was proposed to make up the New South Wales and New Zealand mails on Wednesday instead of Thursday, and to despatch them by one of the Guion steamers.

5. The Agents-General of New South Wales and New Zealand had first to consider the course which it was advisable to adopt for the next month, and, in compliance with their advice, the mails were announced to be made up on Saturday for the Cunard boat, instead of on Wednesday for the Guion boat, as at first contemplated. There could not be a greater proof of the hardship of the new arrangement made by the Post Office than that, under its provisions, it became necessary, as a choice of evils, to select that of fixing the date of departure of the mails on Saturday. That this day of departure is an evil is a fact which was impressed upon the colonies by the Post Office itself, when the date of departure had originally to be fixed. The Hon. Mr. Saul Samuel, Postmaster-General of New South Wales, whose duty it was to arrange the day of despatch, wrote from London on the 27th of November, 1873, "In the time table which you furnished, the day of departure is fixed for Saturday. The London Post Office Authorities, however, strongly objected to that day, and urged that it would tend to make the service unpopular here if it were retained. It therefore became necessary to choose one or two other days—viz., Tuesday or Thursday, upon which subsidized steamers leave for America."