

1877.

NEW ZEALAND.

EMIGRATION TO NEW ZEALAND.

(LETTERS FROM THE AGENT-GENERAL.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the MINISTER for IMMIGRATION.

(No. 377.)

7, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.,

17th May, 1876.

SIR,—

In the paragraph of my letter of the 18th February (No. 123), which referred to the subject of Continental emigration, I informed you that claims for compensation, which I considered wholly inadmissible, had been put forward by some of the German contractors, and intimated to you my determination to resist those claims. I had hoped by this date to have been able to inform you by telegraph that all such questions had been satisfactorily concluded. But as, contrary to my expectation, proceedings are still pending, I think it may be well to lay before you, for the information of the Government, a somewhat detailed statement of the circumstances connected with the conclusion of the various contracts, my engagements under them, and the claims that were in my opinion unduly advanced in consequence.

2. You will remember that when I took over the Queensland Government contract in 1874, it was on the express understanding that the contractor, Mr. Sloman, should complete it within eighteen months from the date of its assignment to me, the period of its completion determining on the 14th of November, 1875. Had that contract been duly completed, I was under an engagement consequent thereupon to enter into a new contract with Mr. Kirchner, by which he should be bound to select and ship 4,000 emigrants during three years from the date of the fulfilment of the Queensland contract; and Mr. Kirchner was to be bound under this agreement to arrange for passages in Mr. Sloman's ships. But my arrangement with Mr. Kirchner was made strictly contingent on the conclusion by Mr. Sloman of the transferred Queensland contract in due time. During the period of the fulfilment of the Queensland contract, I agreed to give Mr. Kirchner a fixed salary of £400 a year. After the conclusion of the Queensland contract he was to receive, under my consequent new arrangement with him, in lieu of salary, a fixed commission of £1 per approved statute adult.

3. When Sir Julius Vogel's general instructions concerning the conduct of emigration were issued in April, 1875, Mr. Kirchner was at once duly informed, and soon afterwards accompanied me to Switzerland, the Tyrol, and Italy, for the express purpose of informing his various local agents that I could not guarantee free emigration continuing after the close of the current season, which would end with the freezing of the Elbe.

4. The season came to an end, and the Queensland contract had not been completed within the time specified, the 14th of November.

5. On the 7th of February, I advised the several parties concerned of the total stoppage of free emigration from the Continent. I subjoin a copy of my telegram to that effect. They immediately professed to have promised free passages to some 3,000 emigrants, and to have engaged shipping from Mr. Sloman for that number in advance. This was, on the face of it, such an obvious conspiracy to force the Government to carry on free emigration contrary to its expressed policy, that I at once determined to enforce my strict rights under the several agreements. Accordingly I refused to accept any emigrants to whom free passages had been promised, unless they had been actually accepted and approved by Mr. Kirchner himself, in accordance with my instructions to Agents, declining to recognize the action of his local agents. Mr. Kirchner at first said he thought he had engaged 500, but could furnish neither list nor certificates. A little later, the number rose to 1,000. A few days subsequently, he stated that between the sailing of the "Gothenburg" in December and the 20th of January, he had ordered his agents to engage 1,500, and that shipping must be provided for that number. Finally, upon examination of the documents, I discovered that not one of the alleged number had been really approved by Mr. Kirchner, and I accordingly decided not to accept any one of them.

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