

That they do not recognize the right of France to establish penal settlements so as to endanger the social and moral wellbeing of neighbouring communities, and still less its claim for compensation for the removal of such settlements.

That they are not prepared to sacrifice the interests of the natives of the New Hebrides (who cannot protect themselves) in order to secure benefits to these colonies by the possible removal of evils to which they ought not to be exposed.

That on no consideration will they approve of or acquiesce in the annexation of the New Hebrides by France.

That, in their opinion, the Government of New Zealand would act wisely by supporting a policy similar to that followed by the Victorian Government in this matter.

That they express their satisfaction at the report that Great Britain has declined to give its consent to the annexation by France of the New Hebrides, and their hope that Great Britain will maintain its present attitude.

That a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to the Premier.

Certified by WM. BANNERMAN, Clerk of Synod.

No. 68.

The PREMIER to the CLERK to PRESBYTERY, Dunedin.

REVEREND SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 26th May, 1886.

No. 62.

I have been directed by the Hon. Mr. Stout to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 20th instant, conveying a resolution adopted by the Presbytery of Dunedin relative to the proposed annexation of the New Hebrides by France, and to ask you to thank the Presbytery for the prompt attention given to Mr. Stout's letter.

I have, &c.,

ALEX. WILLIS,

Secretary.

Rev. M. Finlayson, Clerk to Presbytery, Dunedin.

No. 69.

INVERCARGILL PUBLIC MEETING to the PREMIER.

PUBLIC meeting last night following resolutions unanimously carried: "That, in interests of civilization and commerce, this meeting protests against proposed annexation of New Hebrides by France. That, in opinion of this meeting, Government should unite with Governments of Australian Colonies in urging upon Imperial Government desirableness of placing New Hebrides under protection of British flag.

Invercargill, 27th May, 1886.

J. L. McDONALD, Chairman.

No. 70.

The MODERATOR of the ASSEMBLY of the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH of NEW ZEALAND to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Sydenham, 27th May, 1886.

No. 40.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your reply to my letter of the 24th ultimo re New Hebrides, which came to hand on the 10th instant. At your suggestion, I have obtained opinions from the various Presbyteries touching the point raised in your letter, and I have now the honour to inform you that the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand deems it a duty most solemnly to protest against the proposed annexation by France. The Church fully recognizes the great importance of France ceasing to send convicts to any of the islands of the Southern Seas, and of England having outposts in the Eastern Pacific; but is humbly of opinion that the prospect of these results would be purchased at too high a price by the cession of the New Hebrides to France. For,—

1. Although all the proposals referred to by you were secured by treaty, it would be most injurious to the work of our missionaries, and to the best interests of the natives.

2. While not questioning the good faith of the present Government of France, it is difficult to say what effect might be given to the conditions of the treaty by those who may be afterwards in power in that country; more especially as it has been plainly indicated by certain French authorities that the main purpose for which these islands were desired was, that there might be a larger field for the direct deportation of convicts, or for the removal of those who had completed the period of their imprisonment in New Caledonia.

3. If it be recognized by us as a duty to protect the colony from "the withering and baneful influences of near proximity to convict settlements constantly replenished with fresh criminals," it would be highly impolitic to acquiesce in the cession of a very considerable group of islands in our immediate neighbourhood to a Power which has been in the habit of deporting its worst criminals.

4. It is unbecoming the dignity of Great Britain to entertain the proposed concession to France to induce her to discontinue a practice which is universally and justly condemned by all civilized nations.

5. If it be one of the conditions of the Hervey group coming under the protection of England that the natives consent to the annexation, then the same principle ought, in all fairness, to be applied to the New Hebrides, and there is good reason to believe that the natives would not be willing to place their present well-being and future destinies in the hands of France.

6. The Presbyterian Church has been the first to occupy these islands by her missionaries; she has spent almost £200,000, and is spending at the rate of £6,000 per annum, solely for the pur-