

1886.  
NEW ZEALAND.

## PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF NEW HEBRIDES BY FRANCE

(FURTHER PAPERS RELATING TO THE).

[In Continuation of A.—5B, 1886.]

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

No. 57.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 22nd April, 1886.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your confidential despatches of the 27th February Nos. 8 and 9. and the 5th March, relating to the Pacific islands and the questions now pending with France.

I had hoped to write to you fully on the whole subject by this mail; but I have been so greatly pressed with work of all kinds that it has been quite impossible for me to find time for a letter which must attempt, in some way, to deal with the same large questions as you have raised. I must therefore ask your permission to put off my letter for a little. But I cannot hesitate to say at once, with respect to the concluding portion of your despatch, that there is not now, any more than there has been for a long time past, the slightest doubt in my mind that the time has come when Her Majesty's Government will arrive at a decision, or that France will get possession of the New Hebrides. Of one thing the colonies must assuredly be convinced, that, since Mr. Forster's death, it would be hard to find among English statesmen any one with so profound a regard for and desire to safeguard the interests of Australasia as the Earl of Rosebery; and if he, at last, comes to the conclusion, as I believe he will, that the cession of the New Hebrides, sooner or later, must be made, you may be perfectly sure that the foreign policy of the Empire has made it really inevitable.

It must surely be a dream for any one now to think that New South Wales and Victoria will work together in this question, any more than they did about the Federal Council; nor can any one really suppose that France will wait for an indefinite time for a concert among the Australasian Governments, which experience has shown to be so utterly hopeless. New South Wales has now declared that she will support Her Majesty's Government in such action as Lord Rosebery may take, and it has always seemed to me certain that, in the end, her voice would prevail rather than that of Victoria.

I shall soon answer your despatches fully; but in the meantime I transmit to you herewith copy of a letter I have received from the Colonial Office respecting the *Récidiviste* Bill, from No. 56. which you will see that the French Government have undertaken to postpone their proposed action in regard to the sending of *récidivistes* to the Isle of Pines until an answer shall have been received by Her Majesty's Government on the subject of the New Hebrides; which Lord Rosebery has said might be expected to arrive towards the end of April.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,  
F. D. BELL.

Enclosure.

SIR,—

Colonial Office, Downing Street, 17th April, 1886.

With reference to previous correspondence respecting the transportation of *récidivistes* to the Western Pacific, I am directed by Earl Granville to inform you that a letter has been received in this department from the Foreign Office, from which it appears that the French Government have undertaken to postpone their proposed action in this matter until an answer should have been received by Her Majesty's Government from the Australian Colonies on the subject of the New Hebrides, which Lord Rosebery had stated might be expected to arrive towards the end of April.

I am to take this opportunity of informing you that, in the *Journal Officiel*, of the 11th ultimo, a Presidential decree was published appointing a "Commission de Classement" for the execution of the Habitual Criminals Deportation Law. The duties of this Commission will be to give its opinion on cases of *récidivistes* to be granted the privilege of individual relegation; on those of *récidivistes* to be exempted from relegation on the score of illness or infirmity; and on the designation of the territory to which each *récidiviste* subjected to collective relegation shall be sent, or of the colony or French possession in which each *récidiviste* allowed the privilege of individual relegation shall be obliged to reside.

The Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

I have, &c.,  
JOHN BRAMSTON.