

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.

No. 58.

The CHAMBER of COMMERCE, Invercargill, to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Chamber of Commerce, Invercargill, 17th May, 1886.

I have the honour to inform you that this Chamber desires to record its protest against the proposed annexation of the New Hebrides Islands by France, and would urge the Government to use its influence in preventing any such annexation.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES ROUT,
Secretary.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

No. 59.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 18th May, 1886.

Nos. 32 and 37.

No. 40.

I have the honour to forward for your information the enclosed copies of resolutions which have been passed by the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce, and the Presbyteries of Auckland and Christchurch, on the subject of the proposed annexation of New Hebrides by France. Copies of the resolutions from the Chamber have been forwarded by His Excellency to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. I also enclose copy of a letter I have addressed to the Moderator of the Assembly of the Presbytery of New Zealand in reply to the resolutions of the Presbyteries, and as soon as I am in possession of the determination at which the Church arrives I will again communicate with you.

I have, &c.,

Sir F. Dillon Bell, Agent-General.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 60.

The PREMIER, Victoria, to the PREMIER, New Zealand.

(Telegram.)

FOLLOWING is telegram from Agent-General: "London, 19th May. Had long conversation with Secretary of State for the Colonies, very satisfactory character. He stated that Her Majesty's Government adhered pledge to colonies, and so informed French Ambassador, from the first, French proposal too important to decline without direct reference to colonies. French Ambassador now privately informed no prospect of assenting. Official reply to him will await receipt official despatches from colonies.—GRAHAM BERRY, Agent-General."

Melbourne, 20th May, 1886.

For the Premier,

E. J. THOMAS.

No. 61.

The MODERATOR of PRESBYTERY, Napier, to Captain RUSSELL, M.H.R.

AFTER consideration of the Premier's circular, the Presbytery of Hawke's Bay unanimously agreed strongly to protest against the proposed annexation of the New Hebrides by France as an act of injustice to the natives, as a grave and serious wrong to the cause of our Presbyterian Mission, and as a standing menace to the safety and prosperity of the Colony of New Zealand. Agreed to transmit this minute to Captain Russell for presentation to the Government.

DAVID SIDEX,

Napier, 20th May, 1886.

Moderator of Presbytery.

No. 62.

The CLERK to PRESBYTERY, Dunedin, to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

First Church, Dunedin, 20th May, 1886.

I have the honour, by direction of the Presbytery of Dunedin, to forward the following resolution, which was unanimously adopted by the Presbytery, on the motion of the Rev. W. Will, seconded by Mr. Kirk Ramsay:—

No. 40.

"The Presbytery, having considered the proposals submitted by the Premier anent the annexation of the New Hebrides by France, desires to cordially thank the Premier for his courteous consideration in affording the Presbyterian Church an opportunity of expressing her mind in regard to the great and important interests involved in the proposal to allow France to take possession of the New Hebrides, earnestly hopes that the New Zealand Government may yet see its way to act in cordial co-operation with the Government of Victoria, which has so consistently and forcibly maintained and advocated the righteous claims of the colonies and of the inhabitants of these islands; assures the Premier that the Presbytery cannot for one moment entertain, on any consideration, the idea of jeopardizing the interests of the native population by concurring in the proposal that France should be permitted to extend her sovereignty over the Islands of the New Hebrides; declares its firm conviction that the best way to prevent the importation of French criminals into the islands of the South Seas is not to afford facilities to France for extending her territory in these regions, and its hope that the spirit of freedom which animates the Australasian Colonies will be sufficient to prevent the continuation of convictism in the South Pacific."

I have, &c.,

ALEX. M. FINLAYSON,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

Presbytery Clerk.

No. 63.

The PREMIER to the MODERATOR of PRESBYTERY, Napier.

HAVE received protest of Presbytery against annexation of New Hebrides from Captain Russell. The matter is now engaging the attention of Parliament.

Wellington, 21st May, 1886.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 64.

The PREMIER to the CHAMBER of COMMERCE, Invercargill.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 21st May, 1886.

I have been directed by the Hon. the Premier to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th instant, stating that the Invercargill Chamber of Commerce desired to record a protest against the proposed annexation of the New Hebrides by France, and to inform you, for the information of the Chamber, that the matter is now engaging the attention of Parliament.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Chamber of Commerce, Invercargill.

ALEX. WILLIS.

No. 65.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 22nd May, 1886.

Since I wrote to you last regarding the New Hebrides question the proposals of the French Ambassador have been widely discussed in the colony. I have not yet received answers from all the various Presbyterian bodies, but from those that I have I am of opinion that the Presbyterian Church will not consent to the New Hebrides being annexed.

Both in Victoria and New South Wales the Presbyterian Church have urged the Government not to consent to any alteration of the *status quo*, and it seems to me that, even if convictism is to be continued, the Church will sooner submit to that than to their missions being disturbed.

The matter came before Parliament on Wednesday last, when Sir George Grey moved a series of resolutions, afterwards withdrawn, which I enclose. I also enclose the report of the debate that took place on them. You will observe that the majority of those who spoke strongly supported the position that, whatever happened, no concessions should be made to France. I am aware, however, that there are many in the House who say that we should confine ourselves to New Zealand, and take no interest in the Pacific question whatever. To them the obtaining of an island more or less is of no consequence. The general feeling, however, seems to be that, even if France made an agreement not to send *récidivistes* to the Pacific, the agreement might not be binding on future French Governments, and that, consequently, the result would be that the giving the New Hebrides to France would only intensify the evil of convictism in the Pacific. The Committee will meet next week, and I shall forward you by wire the results of its deliberations. In my own opinion, the resolution that will be passed by the Committee will be of a general character, and will oppose any concession being given to France.

If the result of the matter is, in the end, that we do not obtain Opara and the Cook group, I am afraid the colonists of New Zealand will yet deeply regret the position.

I have, &c.,

Sir F. Dillon Bell, K.C.M.G., Agent-General.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 66.

AUCKLAND PUBLIC MEETING to the PREMIER.

LARGE meeting representatives all denominations resolved to oppose cession of Hebrides to France. Petitions being largely signed.

Auckland, 25th May, 1886.

RAINSFORD BAVIN, Chairman.

T. M. HAULTAIN.

No. 67.

The CLERK of PRESBYTERIAN SYNOD of OTAGO and SOUTHLAND to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Roslyn, Dunedin, 25th May, 1886.

I have the honour to forward to you the accompanying resolutions *re* annexation of the New Hebrides by France, adopted this evening at a meeting of members of Synod gathered from all parts of the Synod's bounds. The meeting was representative of both ministers and elders. The resolutions were adopted unanimously.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier.

WM. BANNERMAN, Clerk of Synod.

Enclosure.

RESOLUTIONS anent ANNEXATION of the NEW HEBRIDES by FRANCE adopted by MEMBERS of the PRESBYTERIAN SYNOD of OTAGO and SOUTHLAND, at a Meeting held in Dunedin on the 25th May, 1886.

THAT the members of Synod now present express their satisfaction with the Premier's recognition of the interest which this Church has in the settlement of the question of the annexation of the New Hebrides by France.

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-

pose of bringing the natives under the civilizing influences of Christianity; and, being a part of the British nation, she feels that, if not entitled to claim these islands for England, she has, at any rate, a right to demand that they shall not be handed over to a foreign Power.

7. Instead of earning the gratitude of the colonists and their descendants for many generations to come, as indicated in your letter, it is felt that our Church would receive the strongest condemnation of all the other branches of the Christian Church if she consented to an action which would have a most damaging effect on all Christian effort in behalf of heathen nations; for, if, after many years of successful labour in Christianizing and civilizing the inhabitants of a large group of islands, she willingly handed them over to an influence certain to be disastrous to the good results attained, what hope could there be that, under other circumstances, she would be faithful to the great mission with which she has been intrusted.

8. The Church, while deprecating any action that could reasonably be construed into a *causa belli*, is persuaded that a firm protest by the Government against the acquisition of these islands by France is much more likely to preserve peace than any temporizing policy touching their ownership.

While thanking you for your great courtesy and hearty recognition of the Church's interest in the settlement of this question, I beg, for the reasons above stated, and in the name of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, most respectfully but most emphatically to protest against the annexation by France; and I trust that your Government will unite with the great majority of the Australasian people in their endeavour to preserve the independence of the islands.

The Hon. Robert Stout, Premier.

I have, &c.,
T. R. CAIRNS.

No. 71.

The PREMIER to the CLERK of PRESBYTERIAN SYNOD of OTAGO and SOUTHLAND.

REVEREND SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 28th May, 1886.

I have been directed by the Hon. the Premier to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the No. 67. 25th instant, enclosing the resolution of the Presbyterian Synod of Otago and Southland on the proposed annexation of the New Hebrides by France, after the consideration of my letter of the 24th ultimo; and to beg that you will be good enough to convey to the Synod Mr. Stout's thanks for the prompt attention they have given to the matter.

Rev. W. Bannerman,
Clerk of Synod, Roslyn, Dunedin.

I am, &c.,
ALEX. WILLIS,
Secretary.

No. 72.

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

REVEREND SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 28th May, 1886.

I have been directed by the Hon. the Premier to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the No. 70. 27th instant, conveying the decisions at which the various Presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand have arrived as to the proposed annexation of the New Hebrides by France, after consideration of his letter of the 24th ultimo. I am to request you to be good enough to convey No. 40. the thanks of Mr. Stout to the Presbyteries for their prompt attention to the matter.

Rev. T. R. Cairns,
Moderator of the Assembly, Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, Sydenham.

I have, &c.,
ALEX. WILLIS,
Secretary.

No. 73.

The BISHOP of AUCKLAND to the PREMIER.

DEAR MR. STOUT,—

Bishop's Court, Auckland, 25th May, 1886.

I enclose a copy of a resolution which was passed at a meeting of Church of England people last week, and of which I was requested to send you a copy.

Leper Island, one of the islands of the New Hebrides group, has for many years been cared for by our Church of England missionaries, under the direction of Bishops Pattison and Selwyn; and the Banks Islands, close by, are among the most hopeful fields of missionary work at present visited by Bishop John Selwyn.

If the New Hebrides group were to be annexed by France, I fear the Republican Government of that country would not extend to all Christian missions there alike the toleration shown by our Indian Government to missions in Hindostan. Wishing you an interesting and not too laborious session of Parliament,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
W. G. AUCKLAND, Bishop.

Enclosure.

RESOLUTION carried unanimously at a Meeting of CLERGY and LAITY of the CHURCH of the PROVINCE of NEW ZEALAND, commonly called the Church of England, on the 21st May, 1886.

THIS meeting, representing the interests of the Church of the Province of New Zealand, commonly called the Church of England, in the north-eastern islands of the New Hebrides group, concurs in the opinion expressed by the representatives of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, acting in the interests of its long-continued and important mission in the south and western islands of that group, and earnestly deprecates the annexation of the New Hebrides Islands by France.

W. G. AUCKLAND, Bishop.

No. 74.

LORD CARRINGTON to HIS EXCELLENCY the GOVERNOR.

New Zealand, 7th June, 1886. (Received 10½ p.m.)

ON receipt of Consul's letter from New Caledonia, sent Secretary of State for Colonies following telegram: "Latest news from British Consul at New Caledonia. French man-of-war "Dives" (? "Decrès") left for New Hebrides 30th May, taking on board troops and provisions for three months, and put into fighting order. It is supposed that their intention is to hoist French national flag. Senior officer Ordnance Department transport, to proceed to New Hebrides day after with timber and corrugated iron for barracks. Entrance to New Caledonia reported watched."

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