

Enclosure 2 in No. 26.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the SECRETARY, General Post Office, London.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 17th February, 1888.

Since writing to you on the 6th and 14th December, I have received a despatch from the New Zealand Government, stating that arrangements have been made for continuing the service *via* San Francisco for one year after the expiration of the existing contract, namely, till November, 1889. I enclose copy of the resolution passed in the House of Representatives on the 22nd December, authorising the extension of the contract for that period, and expressing the desire of the House that definite proposals for the continuance of the Pacific service should be laid before them at the opening of the next session in April. My Government have no doubt of the New South Wales Government concurring in the extension of the contract, as they had formally expressed their wish for a continuance of the service.

I have already informed you of the communications between New Zealand and Canada respecting a service *via* Vancouver, and inquiries are still going on as to the possibilities of the Canadian route. A promise was made to the New Zealand Parliament that full consideration should be given to both routes, and my Government will, next session, recommend the route which is likely to be most advantageous.

Under these circumstances the duty devolves upon me of renewing the appeal I have made to the Imperial Post Office on the subject of the apportionment of postage. Although a final decision on the question of a Pacific service is reserved for next session of the New Zealand Parliament, what took place during last session indicates clearly that there is no intention of giving up the service; so that, practically, it may be said that a service will be maintained, whether by San Francisco or by Vancouver, provided a satisfactory arrangement can be made with the Imperial Post Office as to postage. I beg, therefore, to express the earnest hope that the Postmaster-General will be pleased to recommend the Treasury to continue the existing arrangement for another year, to November, 1889; and with regard to future apportionment in a more permanent service, I venture to urge once more the reasonableness of my request, that if the Treasury has finally decided not to continue the present apportionment permanently I may at least be informed of what would be considered right instead.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, General Post Office, London.

F. D. BELL.

No. 27.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Wellington.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 7th March, 1888.

In continuation of my letter of the 18th February, I beg to enclose copy of correspondence with the Imperial Post Office, relative to substituting Saturdays for Wednesdays as the despatch day of the London mails to New Zealand *via* San Francisco.

With regard to the steamers to be employed for that purpose, you will see from the table of days and hours of arrival at New York of the Queenstown mail packets during the last six months, that there is no reason to suppose the service will be less efficiently performed in future. Under these circumstances the Post Office has agreed to change the London despatch from Wednesday to Saturday, beginning with the next mail, which will accordingly leave on Saturday, the 24th March, instead of the 21st. I telegraphed this to you on the 5th instant.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Postmaster-General, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure 1 in No. 27.

The IMPERIAL POST OFFICE to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

General Post Office, London, 2nd March, 1888.

In reply to your letter of the 16th of last month, I beg leave to acquaint you that to change from Wednesday to Saturday the day of despatch for the mails sent hence to New Zealand *via* San Francisco would not present any insuperable difficulties to this department, although some trouble would be caused by derangement of duties. To the public in this country Saturday would be in some respects an advantageous day of despatch, more particularly in respect of the weekly newspapers, of which so many are published on Saturday.

In answer to your inquiry whether, in the event of a Saturday despatch from London, the mails would always have the advantage of being carried by such steamers as the "Etruria" and "Umbria," I am bound to inform you that there are no other mail steamers of equal speed, although the whole of the vessels habitually used by the Cunard Company for the mail service are of high speed. In the six months ended the 31st of January, 1888, two of the Cunard Company's contract voyages have been performed by the "Gallia," and one by the "Bothnia," while the rest have been performed by the "Etruria," "Umbria," "Aurania," and "Servia." The "Bothnia," a comparatively slow ship, was only employed on this occasion under exceptional circumstances, and is not usually employed in the mail service.

To enable you to judge of the advantages offered to the New Zealand mails by the Cunard steamers, I send you herewith a statement showing the days and hours of arrival at New York of the packets despatched from Queenstown every Sunday during the last six months. I have no reason to suppose that the service of this company will be less efficiently performed in the future than in the past.

I have, &c.,

Sir Francis D. Bell, K.C.M.G., C.B.

E. H. REA.