

No. 5.

The Hon. Sir H. A. ATKINSON to the AGENT-GENERAL, London.

SIR,—

General Post Office, Wellington, 22nd August, 1888.

The question of ocean mail-services was considered by the House of Representatives on Thursday and Friday last, and by a majority of eighteen it was determined that the San Francisco service should be discontinued after November, 1889.

I enclose, for your information, copies of the resolutions as introduced by the Government, and as amended by Mr. Ward, acting on behalf of those members opposed to the San Francisco service.

I regret I am unable to send you a print of the complete debate, but I have succeeded in obtaining a proof of Friday's proceedings, from which you will be able to determine the exact position of the mail-service question. Briefly, the House has affirmed that a fortnightly mail-service with Great Britain shall be continued; that Government negotiate with Great Britain, Canada, and New South Wales for a Canadian service at a reasonable cost to the colony; that, if negotiations are favourable, tenders to be invited for a four-weekly service *via* Canada, as well as for four-weekly and fortnightly services by direct steamers; that all correspondence and tenders be submitted to the next Parliament for its consideration and decision.

It will be necessary to initiate negotiations immediately. I intend therefore to communicate with the Government of New South Wales so soon as Parliament is prorogued. I shall be glad if you will approach the Imperial Government and the Canadian authorities in London with the view of ascertaining what direct pecuniary support they are prepared to give a Canadian-New Zealand-Australian four-weekly mail-service. You will gather from the resolutions I submitted to the House that the Government considered the colony's share of the cost of a San Francisco or Canadian service should not exceed £18,000 a year. This, I may say, was based on the assumption that the mails would be conveyed between Vancouver and Great Britain free of cost to the colony, and that an arrangement for the division of the London postages somewhat similar to that now in force in respect of the San Francisco service would be agreed to by the Imperial Post Office. I also forward you printed correspondence in connection with the Pacific mail-service question.

I shall be anxious to learn the result of your negotiations with the Imperial and Canadian authorities, and you will, I have no doubt, take the earliest opportunity to advise me.

I have, &c.,

Sir F. D. Bell, K.C.M.G., C.B.,
Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

H. A. ATKINSON,
Postmaster-General.

Enclosure 1 in No. 5.

SUPPLEMENTARY ORDER PAPER. — HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. — Tuesday, the 14th day of August, 1888.

HON. SIR H. A. ATKINSON, in Committee of the whole House, to move the following resolutions:—

1. That, in the opinion of this House, a two-weekly mail-service should be continued between New Zealand and Great Britain.

2. That the Government be authorised to enter into negotiations with the Governments of New South Wales, the United States of America, Canada, and Great Britain, with the view of obtaining a four-weekly Pacific mail-service, under which the main boats will call at some New Zealand port for the delivery and receipt of mails. The time occupied in transit to be not more than twenty days between New Zealand and San Francisco, or Vancouver, in the event of the latter being selected as the terminal port in America. The total amount to be paid by New Zealand in respect of carriage of mails from and to Great Britain not to exceed £18,000 per annum. That, if negotiations be successful, the Government be authorised to call for tenders for the performance of such service for a term not exceeding five years.

3. That the Government be also authorised, (1) to call for tenders for a four-weekly mail-service by direct steamers between New Zealand and Great Britain. The time occupied in transit of the mails to be not more than forty days from New Zealand to Plymouth, and forty-three days from Plymouth to New Zealand. The tenderers to state at what rate per pound they will convey the letters, books and packets, and newspapers, and at what fixed subsidy per annum they will perform the service. And (2) to call for tenders for a fortnightly mail-service by direct steamers on the same terms and conditions as for the four-weekly service. The term of contract not to exceed five years.

4. That no bonus be paid for the mails being delivered in less than contract time.

5. The steamers to be efficient screw steam-vessels of the first class, and fully equal to Class 100 A1, Lloyd's Register, and of not less than 2,500 tons gross, having spar decks and large capacity for passengers and cargo, and ample ventilation for passing through tropical latitudes. The vessels to be fitted up with refrigerating-chambers, and also chilled chambers for fruit and dairy-produce.

6. That, in event of a tender being received for the Pacific service within the limit of subsidy to be paid by New Zealand, the Government be authorised to accept such tender, in conjunction with any suitable offer received for a four-weekly service by direct steamers, provided the cost of the latter service does not exceed £15,000 a year.

7. Should the tenders for the Pacific service not be within the limit fixed by Parliament, the Government be authorised to accept the lowest tender for a fortnightly direct service, provided the subsidy or cost does not exceed £30,000 per annum.