

No. 18.

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

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 12th December, 1888.

Since writing to you on the 16th November on the subject of the proposed mail-service between Vancouver and Australia, I have had an interview with Lord Knutsford, and explained more fully to his Lordship the present position of the matter, as well as the necessity for some intimation reaching you before long as to the real intentions of Her Majesty's Government. I am to send in a formal letter to the Colonial Office, to which I may assure you all reasonable consideration will be given; but I am strengthened in the opinion that there is very little chance, if any, of an Imperial money-subsidy to any Pacific service at all.

Permit me to take the opportunity of alluding to a supposition which, from recent files of newspapers, I gather had existed, that in the negotiations relating to a Vancouver service I had encouraged the idea of a branch line to New Zealand from Fiji or some other place. On the contrary, as you have been long aware, I have invariably said here that to any scheme of the kind New Zealand would never give a sixpence.

The Hon. the Postmaster-General, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

No. 19.

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

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 8th March, 1889.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 24th January, covering an advertisement calling for tenders for a direct mail-service, and copies of the conditions in the proposed contract. The advertisement has been duly inserted in the London papers, and I have also thought it expedient to insert it in the *Glasgow Herald* and *Liverpool Courier*, as those papers circulate in great shipping centres, and the time is not too long for sending in tenders to reach you by the 31st May.

It is quite clear that, in the present state of affairs relating to a Pacific service *via* Vancouver, you could not invite tenders by that route. The Australian Governments still seem to be very indifferent about it, probably waiting for Canada to propose a definite plan; while as regards the Imperial Government I can only repeat what I have said, that there is no chance of anything being done unless and until Canada and Australasia come to an agreement and declare how much they will give as subsidy. The Finance Minister of the Dominion has just presented his Budget, according to which votes will be proposed for both Atlantic and Pacific services; but the amounts are not yet known here. Sir Charles Tupper is at Ottawa, and will certainly use all his influence to get sufficient votes passed; and on this being done the Governments of Australia and New Zealand will know how much to give themselves, when there will be a better chance for pressure on Mr. Goschen for an Imperial contribution.

In the meanwhile, however, the interesting news you are pleased to give me in relation to the San Francisco service is of great importance, and puts a new complexion on the whole subject. It has for some time past been evident that, if the United States really mean to checkmate Canada and keep on a San Francisco line, the question of a "Pacific service" will be practically settled by them, and not by the Dominion, on account of the immense sums they have in their Treasury; and, if Mr. Spreckels and his friends can presently make a definite declaration as to a large subsidy for a fortnightly service by San Francisco, the New Zealand House of Representatives may think fit to reconsider their decision of last year. A very recent political point is sure to have much weight with the President—namely, the formation of a United States naval station at Pangopango; for, as the Sandwich Islands are even now, for all practical purposes, American territory, so the naval station at Pango will make another strong link in the chain tending to continue a fast steam communication between the United States and Australasia. I will keep your news secret for the present, as you desire, but I presume you do not forbid its being communicated confidentially to Lord Knutsford.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Postmaster-General, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

No. 20.

Mr. GIBBS to the Hon. the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Wellington.

The New Zealand Shipping Company (Limited),
Wellington, 31st May, 1889.

SIR,—

Referring to the notice, dated the 23rd January last, calling for tenders for a fortnightly and four-weekly alternative direct-mail service between New Zealand and Plymouth, I have the honour, by instruction of the Board of Directors of this company, to inform you that this company, in conjunction with the Shaw, Savill, and Albion Company, is prepared to enter into a contract for a monthly service for the conveyance of mails between this colony and Plymouth for three years from December next, on the same terms and conditions as the existing contract.

The following steamers will convey the mails from Plymouth: "Rimutaka," "Kaikoura," "Tongariro," "Aorangi," and "Ruapehu"; and to Plymouth: "Ionic," "Coptic," "Doric," "Arawa," and "Tainui."

I have further the honour to inform you that, in the event of the mail-service *via* San Francisco being discontinued, this company, in conjunction with the Shaw, Savill, and Albion Company, is