

No. 160.

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

SIR,—

General Post Office, Wellington, 16th February, 1892.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th November last, announcing that, as this colony had decided not to renew the Direct mail-service, your office had determined to forward mails for New Zealand indifferently by the eastern and western routes, according as the mail by the one or the other was timed to reach the colony, thereby abolishing the special superscription for correspondence intended for transmission *via* Italy. That to give effect to this decision it was considered advantageous to send correspondence for all parts of New Zealand *via* Italy in the week immediately following the despatch of the mail *via* San Francisco, and in the second and third weeks following that despatch to send the mails for Invercargill, Christchurch, and Wellington only *via* Italy, retaining the correspondence comprised in the mails for Auckland for despatch *via* San Francisco. And that in the week fixed for the despatch of the mail *via* San Francisco all correspondence would be sent by that route.

To satisfactorily carry out these proposals, your office must have presupposed that a special intercolonial service connecting with the Federal packets had been arranged, for without such a service the delivery of the San Francisco mails throughout the colony would frequently have anticipated the arrival of the third week's correspondence by the Federal route. The department had been negotiating for an intercolonial service, but as it was found that no satisfactory arrangement could be concluded at a price acceptable to the department, and receiving no reply from your office to the inquiries made through the Agent-General on the matter, it was decided to abandon all idea of a special service, and to rely on the ordinary steamers for the conveyance of the Federal mails between the colony and Australia. This was the position on the receipt of your letter; and, in response to the invitation made in the concluding paragraph, counter-proposals were immediately cabled the Agent-General (*vide* Nos. 78 and 83), in effect, that only the first two weeks' collections following the despatch of the mail *via* San Francisco should be sent *via* Italy, unless specially addressed, and that the other two weeks' correspondence should be forwarded by the succeeding San Francisco mail—proposals which, I am pleased to say, were accepted by your office (*vide* No. 80), and which, I am satisfied, are the best that could be adopted under the exceptional circumstances.

The mails which it is desired that your office shall make up for New Zealand *via* Italy are those formerly despatched by the Direct service, without that for the "first port of call"—namely, for Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill, Lyttelton, Napier, New Plymouth, Oamaru, Port Chalmers, Timaru, and Wellington. I trust that it may be found practicable to give complete effect to this.

I have, &c.,

W. GRAY,

For the Postmaster-General.

The Secretary, General Post Office, London.

No. 161.

The ACTING AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER, Wellington.

SIR,—

13, Victoria Street, London, S.W., 4th December, 1891.

Referring to my letter of the 27th November last, relating to the ocean mail-services, I beg leave to transmit copy of letter which I addressed to the Secretary to the General Post Office on the 1st instant, and copy of the reply thereto.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

WALTER KENNAWAY.

Enclosure 1 in No. 161.

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

SIR,—

13, Victoria Street, S.W., 1st December, 1891.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 27th ultimo, informing me that the Postmaster-General has brought under the consideration of Her Majesty's Treasury the views expressed in my letters of the 6th and 17th ultimo, with reference to the contribution from the Imperial revenue towards the expense of the mail-service between San Francisco and New Zealand, and that he was now awaiting the decision of their Lordships in respect thereto.

In the same letter you do me the favour of stating that meanwhile the Postmaster-General had considered that part of my letter of the 6th ultimo which had relation to the routes proposed to be used for the despatch of mails under the altered circumstances of the colonial service, with the result that it was his intention to send the outward correspondence to New Zealand indifferently by the San Francisco and Suez routes, according as the mail by one or other is timed to reach the colony first, and that a notice to that effect had been issued to the public, copy of which you enclosed, and which, I observe, virtually abolishes the system which has hitherto existed as regards specially-superscribed correspondence.

In requesting you to convey to the Postmaster-General my thanks for this information, the substance of which I at once communicated to my Government by cablegram, I venture to point out that there is one part of the subject as regards the substitution of the Suez service for that by the Direct steamers to which you have made no allusion. I refer to the necessity which I pointed out in my letter of the 6th ultimo for arranging for an intercolonial mail-service between New Zealand and Australia, and, in doing so, I asked what the Imperial Post Office would allow towards the cost of such service, the proper establishment of which would materially facilitate the punctual and speedy transit of both outward and Homeward mails, and be an important factor in determining the question as to the time within which correspondence would reach both this country and the colony.