

1898.
NEW ZEALAND.

EXTENSION OF COMMERCE COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF THE) ON THE SAN FRANCISCO AND VANCOUVER MAIL-SERVICES, TOGETHER
WITH THE MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

(MR. McNAB, CHAIRMAN.)

Report brought up on 3rd November, 1898, and ordered to be printed.

ORDER OF REFERENCE.

Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

FRIDAY, THE 30TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1898.

Ordered, "That it be an instruction to the Extension of Commerce Committee to inquire into the recent delays in the forwarding of the San Francisco mail from Auckland; and also to inquire into the time-table for that service, with the object of obtaining such a revision as will enable correspondents in the southern portion of the colony to reply by the outgoing mail in the same way as the Auckland residents are now enabled to do."—(MR. SMITH.)

REPORT.

YOUR Committee expresses its regret that it has not been able to more fully and at an earlier date examine into the question of the San Francisco service as remitted to it for consideration on the 30th September, 1898, but being occupied with subjects previously placed before it, and from the difficulty through so many of its members being engaged on other Committees, there has been unavoidable delay in getting meetings to deal with the business of this Committee.

MAIL DELAYS.

In reference to the recent recurring delays of the San Francisco mails between Auckland and Wellington, this seems to have been due to some dilatoriness, but mainly to the difficulties attendant on two tidal harbours and the Manukau Bar. These conditions necessitate the employment of steamers with a combination of shallow draft and considerable power—conditions difficult to combine, and fulfilled by neither of the steamers employed.

TIME-TABLE.

With the exception of Auckland and, with a narrow margin, at Wellington, opportunity for reply is not afforded by the return San Francisco mail, and, as the demands for this for the whole colony is reasonable, your Committee has taken evidence as far as available. To enable opportunity for reply to inward correspondence as far south as Invercargill would necessitate an interval at Auckland between arrival and departure of eight days, instead of four as at present, and this could only be attained by the substitution of steamers making the passage in seventeen, as against nineteen days under the present contract. If the service is to be the success as a passenger line, which it ought to be, between Australia, New Zealand, and America steamers with the speed contemplated would appear to be necessary, and, since the service is so largely subsidised by the United States of America, your Committee thinks the matter should be arranged by negotiation rather than by calling for tenders, and recommends that negotiations be entered upon with a view to a contract for say, seven years, a term which would be necessary to induce steamship-owners to procure the class of vessels necessary. Arrangements would also be required to permit of the employment of such British steamers as are engaged therewith between Honolulu and San Francisco.