

No. 167.

The Hon. the MINISTER of TRADE and COMMERCE, Ottawa, to the Hon. the PREMIER, Wellington.

DEAR SIR,—

Minister's Office, Ottawa, 14th March, 1899.

Your cable to the Premier, Ottawa, of the 11th instant has been handed to me, and I have this day replied to the effect that the Canadian Government knows nothing of the change referred to, having received no communication nor any intimation of any intention to drop calls at New Zealand by the Canadian-Australian Royal Mail Steamship Company, but mentioning that Brisbane was an optional port of call *en route* in the original contract.

This department was interviewed about a year ago by the chairman of the steamship company, who made strong representations with a view to obtaining an increased subsidy, and he then intimated that unless the company received additional assistance it would possibly be obliged to withdraw. I have heard nothing on the subject since. He was at the time given to understand that Canada could not afford to add anything to the very large amount already paid for the service to Australasia.

I can only infer from your message that they are now proposing to drop the call at New Zealand, substituting a call at Brisbane. This may perhaps be for financial reasons, or it may be simply a misunderstanding, and the fact that they are proposing to call at Brisbane may not involve any interference with the calls at Wellington.

I am aware that their complaint of small cargoes from Australia is well founded, and I have recently noticed that a contract has been made for a large quantity of sugar from Queensland. Possibly the call at Brisbane is simply for the purpose of securing such cargo.

The Canadian Government would not like to see a service interrupted which has promised such good results to all colonies interested, but at the same time I do not feel that, in case it is an attempt to secure additional subsidy, Canada could accede to such demand. The amount, £25,000, now paid is all we can afford.

Yours, &c.,

R. J. CARTWRIGHT.

The Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, Premier, &c., Wellington, New Zealand.

No. 168.

The Hon. the PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 17th March, 1899.

I have the honour to confirm my telegram to you of the 12th instant.

I would explain that, although the company was written to in November last, asking whether it would renew the contract for one year on the terms of the resolution of Parliament of last session, no definite reply has been received up to this date. It would, however, appear from recent Press cables that the company has been negotiating with the Queensland Government, and practically completed an arrangement by which Wellington is to be abandoned as a port of call of the steamers after the 31st instant, and Brisbane substituted. This is understood to be subject to the renewal of the subsidy at present paid by New South Wales.

In a telegram to the Government of Canada I have asked whether the Dominion is a party to the change, and expressed surprise at the possible withdrawal of the service from New Zealand, in reply to which the Premier of Canada has informed me that he knows nothing of the proposed alteration. At the same time I strongly urged the Government of New South Wales not to agree to any variation in the existing running, but am so far without a reply.

I have, &c.,

WM. HALL-JONES, in the absence of the Premier.

The Hon. W. P. Reeves, Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

No. 169.

The Hon. the PREMIER, Wellington, to the Hon. the PREMIER, Ottawa.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 17th March, 1899.

I have the honour to confirm my telegram to you of the 11th instant.

Your reply of the 14th idem has been received.

I may explain that my telegram was sent as the result of unconfirmed information to the effect that the contractors for the Vancouver mail-service intended to cease calling at Wellington after the 31st instant, and to substitute Brisbane as a port of call. Up to this date I am still without any official intimation from the contractors as to their intentions.

I have, &c.,

WM. HALL-JONES, in the absence of the Premier.

The Hon. the Premier, Ottawa, Canada.

No. 170.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER.

(Telegram.)

London, 17th March, 1899.

DAWES states will not renew Vancouver service. Will accordingly advise Imperial Post Office forward by Federal mail-service next week's mails.