

Next, as to New Zealand and Australia. The Pacific service is somewhat more complicated. The geographical position of New Zealand and Australia are such that either one or the other must be at a disadvantage in the operation of the line. If New Zealand is the first port of call after leaving Fiji, then Australians have to travel the extra distance and lose a day and a half in getting to Sydney. If Sydney is the first port of call, there is a still greater disadvantage to the people of New Zealand. However, there are compensations, and if, as is advisable, Auckland, New Zealand, be made the first port of call, then Sydney will secure the advantage of being the terminus of the line. The one offsets the other, and it is thought that an agreement will be come to on that basis.

As regards the goods traffic of the Pacific boats. There must of necessity be an interchange between Canada and Australasia. No heavy goods can go from Great Britain by this express route, owing to the expense of transshipments and railway carriage. Light goods which can afford to pay the extra charge will use that route, and probably form an important branch of the shipping business. It will be for Canada and Australasia to get together and make the most of the regular and rapid communication established by these steamers. I have no doubt that with the pushing, active spirit of these communities, full advantage will be taken of the facilities thus afforded. As the volume of the passenger traffic on these Pacific steamers must at the outset be limited and take some years to develop, a substantial subsidy will be required. There should, however, be no difficulty as to this in respect that, being divided between four Governments, it will not bear heavily on any one of them.

A wrong impression as to the attitude of the British Government towards this enterprise has I understand, been created in Canada by the misleading cable messages to which I have referred. From the first the proposal has received its most careful consideration; but, with the prudence which generally characterizes the spending Departments of the Home Government, it has been considered right and proper to carefully investigate the scheme and its cost before definitely accepting it.

In the discussion at the recent Imperial Conference the colonial representatives pressed the British representatives very closely, and insisted that the provision of improved communication was not so much a question of cost as a question of policy. They urged that if the service was required, as they contended, it should be provided no matter what it cost, although they saw no reason why the cost should be excessive. The British Government expressed their sympathy with the views of the colonial representatives, and has since lost no time in fully considering the matter. It is understood that it has been already decided to share in the Atlantic service, and that service may now therefore be considered as assured. I have little doubt that, so soon as the requirements of the Pacific service have been ascertained and agreed by the Colonial Governments interested, the British Government will be willing to bear its share in that connection also.

There is a feature of the proposal to which I may perhaps refer before closing this letter, and that is, the importance to Canada of the trade with Ireland, Scotland, and the north of England. The Irish are the nearest neighbours of Canada on this side of the Atlantic. There has always been a great bond of sympathy between the two countries, and I believe an earnest desire on the part of Canadians to do all they can to assist their Irish friends. The proposed service can, and doubtless will, do much for Ireland; and, if this improvement can be brought about without injuring, but, on the contrary, benefiting Canada, it is a strong argument in favour of Blacksod Bay, the nearest Irish port to Canada and the connecting railways. It is perhaps unnecessary for me to point out the large trade with Canada now carried on in Scotland and the north of England as distinct from central and southern England, and that in establishing the new service special consideration should be given to these northern districts, which have not, like the southern districts, several lines running from other ports.

Moreover, it is well known that the principal passenger traffic with Canada originates in Scotland and the north of England. There is, besides, a large Continental traffic from northern Europe to Canada passing through these districts.

I have considered this subject to be of sufficient interest to the people of Canada to make these somewhat lengthy explanations, but it is as well that we should thoroughly understand each other from the outset.

Yours truly,

THOMAS H. C. TROUBRIDGE, Bart., Chairman.

No. 106.

The PRESIDENT, Auckland Chamber of Commerce, Auckland, to the Hon. the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Wellington.

SIR,— Auckland Chamber of Commerce, Swanson Street, Auckland, 11th October, 1907.

At a meeting of the Council of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce held yesterday, the vital question of mail communication between this Dominion and the United Kingdom and Europe came up for discussion.

It was felt by all present that the means of communication now available are altogether inadequate for the present and growing needs of New Zealand; being too slow, and, to some extent, unreliable.

Although mails *via* Suez and Vancouver or by direct steamer arrive at regular intervals, still the period between despatch and receipt (from thirty-five to forty-four days) entails too great a delay in such an important matter, and in comparison with the San Francisco service at its best, when reliance could be placed upon a twenty-nine-day delivery, the loss of time is of so great importance to business people and the community generally that this Chamber respectfully places its opinion before you as Premier of the Dominion, and stongly urges that your Government takes some early action towards establishing mail communication on a faster, more satisfactory, and up-to-date basis.