

The position is that the public are notified that the mail closes at 3.30 p.m. When it is obvious that there will be a delay it is customary for the Union Company to send over word to the Post-office, hour by hour, that the mails may be longer delayed. In the case of the "Makura" the bulk of the mail was placed on board at 10.30 Friday night. The last mail went on board—a small quantity only—just previous to the boat sailing.

It must be obvious to you that the only notification the public have of the sailing of the boat is that one authorized, printed, and published by the Post Office Department. The public as a whole have no means of knowing that there has been further delay and other opportunities for mailing letters.

To remedy this the business men are anxious that these vessels shall have a longer time in New Zealand to load produce. They have petitioned the Union Company to bring the boats to Auckland one day earlier—that is, Thursday morning—so as to give two clear days for loading. As the mail has been at present, with the uncertainty of the boat sailing, merchants have to stop up all night, not knowing at what hour they may have to complete their documents.

The contract with the Union Company provides that the steamers shall leave Vancouver and Auckland on the days and at the time to be appointed for that purpose by the Canadian Minister of Trade and Commerce, after consultation with the Postmaster-General of New Zealand. It further provides that each voyage shall be deemed to commence as soon after the completion of the embarkation of the mails as the anchor of such vessel may be weighed. The time to be consumed in the voyage is twenty days without incurring penalty.

My suggestion is that the Union Company should be required to bring their boats here sufficiently early to be able to sail from this port promptly at noon on Saturday; that the specific time for the closing of the mail should be 10 a.m. on Saturday; and the mail should be placed on board before noon on Saturday, and then the ship must sail without any other consideration intervening. It must be a condition, however, that the time of arrival at Vancouver must not be varied, as it might interfere with the transcontinental railway arrangements.

I have discussed this question with Mr. Holdsworth, Chief Postmaster here, and he would welcome any change which would make the closing date of the mails a certain fixture, not liable to the inconvenient changes as at present, and I believe also that the public interests would be consulted by following the suggestions contained herein.

I intimated to the gentleman who sent in the petition to the Union Company that as this was a question involving the sailing of a mail-boat, the time of departure, according to the contract with the Union Company, must be fixed by the two Governments, and the fixture suggested above, in my opinion, to work smoothly, should be unchangeable.

I should be very glad to receive your views on this subject.

I have, &c.,

W. A. BEDDOE,

Canadian Trade Commissioner.

The Hon. the Postmaster-General, Wellington.

[Vanc. Misc. 13/50.]

No. 53.

The CANADIAN TRADE COMMISSIONER, Auckland, to the Hon. the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Wellington.

Department of Trade and Commerce, Canada, Trade Commissioner Service,

SIR,—

Auckland, New Zealand, 11th July, 1913.

Supplementing my letter of the 10th July *re* the sailing-date of Vancouver vessels from this port, I beg to say that some time ago the question of delay in the sailing of the boats arose and the matter was placed in my hands by the Postal authorities of Canada to make arrangements on behalf of the Canadian Government in conformity with the clause in the contract which states that the two Governments must concur in the sailing-date.

Subsequently the Union Company wrote to the Secretary of the General Post Office, Wellington, asking whether, when the sailing of the vessel was delayed beyond the advertised hour, the question of postponement should be referred to the authorities at Wellington, or whether they might use their own discretion to detain the steamer till Saturday morning, to which the Secretary of the Post Office, under date the 10th April, 1912 [No. 192, F.-6, 1912], replied that it was not necessary for the Union Company to refer to the Government in cases where there is no reason to apprehend that the vessel will deliver the mail late in Vancouver.

This is where most of the difficulty has arisen, because the contract distinctly provides that the consent of the two Governments should be given to any change of sailing-time, but the Union Company appear to have had some authority from the Secretary of the Post Office to use their own discretion. Such authority, of course, cannot override the contract. However, the Union Company, acting under the authority of the letter from the Secretary of the Post Office alluded to, do not regard it as necessary to consult anybody as to delay in the sailing of the vessels, although the contract distinctly states that the sailing-date must be nominated by the two Governments.

I think it is most important that the sailing-date of a mail-ship and the hour for closing the mails should be determined by the two Governments, as stipulated in the contract, and that those dates should be strictly adhered to, otherwise the whole mail-connection between New Zealand and London via Canada is likely to be thrown into confusion.

Please read this letter in conjunction with the one of yesterday's date.

I have, &c.,

W. A. BEDDOE,

Canadian Trade Commissioner.

The Hon. the Postmaster-General, Wellington.

Vanc. Misc. 13/53-4.]