

Proposed Scheme.		Existing Contract.	
	Geo. Miles.		Geo. Miles.
Melbourne to Dunedin .....	1490	Sydney to Nelson .....	1233
Dunedin to Lyttelton .....	195	Nelson to Dunedin .....	484
Lyttelton to Wellington.....	173	Nelson to Manukau.....	281
Wellington to Napier... ..	202	Nelson to Dunedin .....	484
Napier to Auckland .....	365		
Auckland to Sydney .....	1280		2482
Wellington to Nelson and Manukau .....	397	Boats in opposite directions .....	2482
	4102	Total Mileage monthly.....	4964
Boat in opposite direction.....	4102		
Total Mileage monthly .....	8204		

The monthly payments to the Company for the performance of this service are 2000*l.*, or an average of 8*s.* 0½*d.* per mile ; the proposed service calculated at the same rate would cost about 3300*l.* per month, or nearly 40,000 per annum, instead of the 24,000*l.* now paid.

At present only three boats are in constant employment ; the proposed scheme would require five, as the boat starting from Sydney would only arrive at Melbourne on the 18th of the month, while the boat carrying the English mail would have been required to start from Melbourne on the preceding 12th

2ndly. The wear and tear of the steamers would be much greater than at present, from being so much longer and more continuously under steam ; and consequently delays from derangement of machinery or other accidents would become much more frequent.

3rdly. As regards facilities for Inter-Provincial communication, the change would be one greatly for the worse. For instance: mails despatched from Auckland to the South by the Sydney and Auckland boat on the 28th of one month would arrive at Wellington on the 2nd of the following month, at Canterbury on the 5th, Otago the 8th ; but the steamer sailing north would have left Otago on the 23rd of the previous month, so that no answers could be returned for 15 days, when mails would be despatched on the 23rd, arriving at Auckland on the 3rd of the ensuing month. Thus the time required between the despatch of a letter from Auckland for any of the Southern settlements, and the receipt of an answer, would be from (say) the 28th of March till the 5rd of May, or 36 days. At present mails are despatched and answers received from one end of the Colony to the other in 20 days, viz., from the 7th to the 27th of each month. The inter-provincial branch service between Manukau and Wellington would not offer any additional facilities for inter-provincial correspondence, beyond bringing the Provinces of Taranaki and Nelson into connection with the main line. Whatever the exact days for arrival and departure might be, they could not be materially different from the days of arrival and departure on the East Coast, as otherwise the two would not correspond.

As regards the inter-colonial correspondence, the advantages of the new plan would be balanced by some disadvantages. In order to test its value as a mail service particular cases must be considered. Supposing for instance the case of correspondence between Melbourne and Otago. A letter leaving Melbourne on the 12th of any month would reach Dunedin on the 20th ; there would then be two routes by which an answer might be sent. It might be forwarded by the same steamer which brought it on the 23rd by way of Sydney, where it would arrive on the 13th of the next month ; and, if a vessel were starting thence immediately, might reach Melbourne in four days more on the 17th. That is to say, the time required for receiving an answer at Melbourne to a letter addressed to Otago would be from the 12th of one month till the 17th of the next, or one month and five days, including an interval of three days at Dunedin to allow of answers being written ; this would be the shortest time within which a letter could be despatched and an answer received, and would probably serve the purposes of correspondents in Dunedin and its immediate neighbourhood ; but the stay of the steamer at Dunedin would be too short to allow of correspondents in the country receiving and answering their letters, and these would accordingly have to wait for the next steamer direct to Melbourne starting on the 10th of the following month and arriving on the 18th, or in one month and six days after the despatch of the original letter. A letter sent from Melbourne by the existing line on the 12th would arrive at Sydney on the 16th, leave on the 17th for Nelson and arrive at Dunedin on the 1st of the following month ; an answer might be despatched on the 4th, which would reach Sydney on the 19th and Melbourne on the 23rd, or one month and eleven days after the despatch of the original letter.

The correspondence, however, between Sydney and Otago, if despatched on the 18th of the month, would not be answered till the 13th of the third month ; unless the answers were sent round by Melbourne, a plan which would only allow of two days delay at Dunedin. By this route they might reach Sydney on the 22nd of the month following, or one month and four days from the despatch of the original letter ; about three days longer than by the present route. It will, however be seen, by the table given in the appendix, that the correspondence of Otago with Sydney is not much more than a fourth of that which it maintains with Melbourne, and the disproportion is rapidly increasing ; so that defective arrangements in this direction become of less importance.

Thus it will be seen that so far at least as inter-colonial communication is concerned Dunedin would decidedly be a gainer by the proposed change ; though a loser as regards the inter-provincial service.

Proposed plan:—Departure from Melbourne on the 12th, arrival at Wellington, 27th ; two days for answers. Departure from Wellington 29th, arrival at Sydney 13th of the following month, and at

Comparison of proposed  
with existing plan.  
Inter Colonial Services,  
Melbourne and Otago.

Sydney to Otago.

Melbourne and Welling-  
ton.