

you had in view from the service of the best steam lines. I regret that you should regard my reply upon this point as “a laboured attempt to see in the proposal an insult to the female immigrants, and a violation of the duties and rights of maternity.” I utterly deny the imputation. I simply dealt with the suggestions of the report in the spirit and on the grounds because of which it was referred for my consideration, in the passage I have quoted above from your own despatch.

5. I regret to perceive that, besides insisting that my letter must have been “most disrespectful,” whether I intended to exhibit a feeling which, I am aware, I never harboured or no, you accuse me of habitually regarding with suspicion and something allied to contempt the instructions or recommendations sent to me from the colony; of a “tendency to object to anything proposed by the Government;” of a “disposition to seize particular points of letters, instead of the broad and general meaning, and, ignoring the context, to found upon such points pages of unnecessary writing.” In regard to the particular letter, the cause of this correspondence—my letter of 10th January, No. 5—I find that of the seven suggestions of the Royal Commission, to which you directed my attention, I signified my concurrence with four; reserved one (the *dépôt* question) for further consideration when you should have had the opportunity of examining the institution at Blackwall, and that at Plymouth, after your arrival in England; and only dissented from two, upon which you yourself had declined to express a positive opinion, but invited me to give them my very earnest consideration. These points were the establishment of a children’s mess on all our ships, and the institution of a medical examination as stringent as in a case of life assurance or a recruit for the army. I gave these proposals, as you desired, my very earnest consideration; and as I differed entirely from the report of the Royal Commission on these points, I thought it the most respectful course I could adopt, both towards the Government and the Royal Commission, to give my reasons for dissenting from them in a very earnest and detailed way. I do not think that there is evidence here of any of the serious faults which you impute as belonging to the character of my correspondence. That it unfortunately has contained, especially during the last year, much writing which I could wish had been unnecessary, I am sadly conscious. During that time there are not many charges that could be brought against the character of a public officer, respecting which I have not had occasion to defend myself in my replies to your despatches. I have been obliged, with great regret and reluctance, to withdraw very much time from the proper duties of my office and the service of the colony, in defending my honor, as a public officer, against such imputations. It was my duty to my own character, it was my duty to the colony, in whose service I have spent many happy and not useless or unhonored years, not to leave such charges unanswered, even though I might subject myself to your further strictures on my letters as being “controversial,” or as containing “unnecessary writing.” I may be permitted to add that such an experience was a novelty in my career. I have, as you well know, served the colony for over twenty years in many and responsible offices, to which, generally in moments of emergency and difficulty, I was called by various Ministries, without distinction of party. I am proud to remember that on no occasion did I fail to receive the cordial and complete support, the generous and ungrudging acknowledgment of such service as I was able to render to the colony by those who employed me, as well as the warmly testified goodwill of the Imperial and Colonial Governments to which I was accredited. And not less now than at any previous time, have I the satisfaction of knowing that the arduous duties, which have devolved upon me in connection with the organization and conduct of the Agent-General’s department, have been discharged with unabated zeal, and with continuous success. Nor do I in the least lose confidence that the services of this department will, notwithstanding temporary misconception, be yet fully and truly appreciated by the people of New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

I. E. FEATHERSTON,  
Agent-General.

The Hon. the Premier.

*Price 3s. 6d.]*

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