

SESS. II.—1884.
NEW ZEALAND.

CONFEDERATION AND ANNEXATION.

NEW GUINEA.

(PAPERS RELATING TO THE PROPOSED ANNEXATION BY QUEENSLAND, AND GENERALLY AS TO THE ACTION OF THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

The AGENT-GENERAL for QUEENSLAND to the COLONIAL OFFICE.

Queensland Government Office,

MY LORD,— 1, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, London, S.W., February 28, 1883.

I have the honour to transmit herewith copy of a telegraphic despatch received from Sir Thomas McIlwraith, Premier of Queensland, instructing me to urge on the attention of the Imperial Government the expediency of annexing to the Colony of Queensland the Island of New Guinea, only those portions of the island not claimed by the Government of Holland being meant.

In addition to the reasons stated in the telegraphic despatch, I beg to call your Lordship's attention to the rapid development of several industries on the coast of New Guinea and the islands adjacent, carried on principally by Queensland colonists. The principal of these industries are gold-mining, pearl-diving, and bêche-de-mer fishing, which employ a rapidly-increasing number of colonists, among whom it becomes more and more difficult for the authorities appointed by the Queensland Government to exercise adequate control, the jurisdiction of that Government extending at present only to islands within sixty miles of the Queensland coast.

The High Commissioner of the Western Pacific is also quite unable, on account of the very extended nature of his jurisdiction, to exercise an adequate supervision over those settlers who are rapidly peopling the islands and coasts of New Guinea, who are beyond the sixty-mile radius, and therefore practically outside all legal restraint in their dealings with the natives and with each other. A glance at the map will show that whoever is in possession of the southern coast of New Guinea, and more especially of the mountainous peninsula forming the south-eastern extremity of the island, practically dominates Torres Straits and its numerous and important islands, commands the only direct approach to Queensland from Europe, and is able to establish an effectual blockade of the northern terminus of the trans-continental railway about to be extended from Brisbane to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Queensland has already experienced much inconvenience and some loss from the escape and landing on her coast of political convicts and other malefactors from the French penal settlement of New Caledonia, though that island is separated from her by nearly a thousand miles of ocean; it is not unreasonable, therefore, that some apprehension should exist in the colony at the possibility of a similar establishment being formed by some foreign Government almost within sight of her territory, and that the Government of the colony should be desirous of taking timely steps to prevent the occurrence of such a misfortune. It is hoped that these reasons will induce your Lordship to give the sanction of the Imperial Government to the proposal embodied in Sir Thomas McIlwraith's telegraphic despatch.

I have, &c.

THOS. ARCHER,

Agent-General for Queensland.

To the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Enclosure.

URGE Imperial Government annex New Guinea to Queensland; reasons, large increase steamer traffic through Torres Straits. Population settled there require government; Imperial coaling depot established; danger to colonies if other Powers take possession. Queensland will bear expense of Government, and take formal possession on receipt of Imperial authority by cable. Letters by mail.

McILWRAITH.

Brisbane, February 26.

NOTE.—Extracted from the Imperial Blue Books, C.—3617 and C.—3814, 1883; and C.—3863, 1884.
Further correspondence is printed in A.—3, Session I. pp. 77–90.