

1885.

NEW ZEALAND.

PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF NEW HEBRIDES
BY FRANCE

(PAPERS RELATING TO THE).

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

No. 1.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,— Premier's Office, Wellington, 29th January, 1885.
On the receipt of your letter of the 19th November last, on the 5th instant, I at once *Confidential* wired to you the views of the Cabinet, which were that we protested against France acquiring the *not printed.* New Hebrides, which have always been considered as belonging to New Zealand, and consequently a portion of the British Empire.

2. The New Hebrides have been the seat of the Presbyterian Missions from Australia, Canada, Scotland, and New Zealand, for many years, and anything done towards the civilization of the natives has been done by British people. The Australian Colonies and New Zealand feel very strongly on the subject, and I feel sure they will never give their consent to handing over these islands to the French.

I may add that, from telegrams received from Victoria, the people there are as strongly against the proposal as we are.

3. Regarding the other part of your letter on the subject of *récidivistes*, I have to express the thanks of the Government to yourself and the other Agents-General for the trouble they have taken in keeping the undesirability of any more convicts being sent to the Pacific steadily before Lord Derby.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT STOUT.

Sir F. D. Bell, K.C.M.G.,
Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

No. 2.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,— 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 21st February, 1885.

You may perhaps remember that in more than one letter to you I have referred to the importation of native labour from the New Hebrides into New Caledonia.

In a speech addressed by the Under-Secretary for the French Colonies to the Conseil Supérieur des Colonies ten days ago, he mentioned that the renewal of immigration of native labour from the New Hebrides had furnished the penal settlement with the labour it required for the development of its industries; but that these operations had only been authorized by the French Government on condition of their not losing the character of free contract, and that the first infraction of the dictates of humanity would be the signal for an immediate prohibition of any recruiting.

The operations of the Compagnie Française des Nouvelles Hébrides are again attracting attention at Paris. The *Économiste Française* said, a week ago, that news had come from the New Hebrides of the company having had a general meeting, at which it was resolved that they should complete their acquisitions of territory so as to occupy all the important points in the islands; that with this object the directors were authorized to double the capital; and that the company was thoroughly determined (*absolument déterminée*) to dominate all the foreign commercial stations in the group, to elbow them out, and by that means to compel the annexation of the islands by France.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

No. 3.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 24th March, 1885.

I find I have not yet acknowledged the receipt of your letter of the 29th January, conveying your instructions adverse to any proposals for the acquisition of the New Hebrides by France.

I have taken the opportunity, at an interview with the Earl of Derby, to inform his Lordship of these instructions.

I have conveyed to the other Agents-General your generous mention of our exertions in connection with the *récidiviste* question, and I beg on their part, as well as my own, to express our respectful thanks to your Government in return.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

No. 4.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 9th April, 1885.

I transmit herewith *Times* reports of questions put in the House of Commons on the 27th and 30th March, respecting Mr. Meade's proposal to cede the New Hebrides to France, and respecting the report of the Western Pacific Commission in 1883.

With regard to the New Hebrides, Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice said that Lord Granville had suggested to Count Münster for the first time on the 10th December that, if Prince Bismarck were to see Mr. Meade, who had the confidence of Lord Derby and himself, an interview might be the means of removing misunderstanding, and Lord Granville afterwards expressed his regret that Prince Bismarck's conversation with Mr. Meade had led to no result; but Her Majesty's Government still considered the agreement between England and France about the New Hebrides to be in force.

With regard to the Western Pacific, Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice said that the Anglo-German Commission, consisting of Dr. Krauel and Mr. Thurston, would shortly make recommendations for joint or identical action by England and Germany for the control of the labour traffic, but that until that Commission had reported it would not be possible to say how far or in what manner effect could be given to the recommendations of the Western Pacific Commission.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure No. 1.

[The *Times*, Saturday, 28th March, 1885.]

HOUSE OF COMMONS, Friday, 27th March.

German Colonial Policy.

MR. GORST asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether Lord Granville did, prior to the 10th December, 1884 (as stated in a German White Book), express a wish to Count Münster that Prince Bismarck should receive Mr. Meade, Assistant Under-Secretary for the Colonies, to a personal interview on colonial matters; whether, as stated in a despatch of Count Münster to Prince Bismarck of the 5th January, Lord Granville expressed his regret that the Prince did not consider Mr. Meade's proposals for the partition of the Western Pacific to be acceptable; whether Lord Granville had previously intimated to the Secretary of State for the Colonies any intention of employing Mr. Meade for this purpose; and whether any communications had subsequently taken place with the French Government in reference to the surrender of the New Hebrides to France, as proposed by Mr. Meade?

LORD E. FITZMAURICE.—Lord Granville suggested to Count Münster for the first time on the 10th December that if Prince Bismarck were to see Mr. Meade, who had the confidence of Lord Derby and himself, he would obtain information as to questions which had been a source of correspondence, and that an interview might be the means of removing misunderstanding. With regard to the honourable member's second question, I understand that Lord Granville expressed his regret that Prince Bismarck's conversations with Mr. Meade had led to no result. In reply to the honourable and learned member's last question, I may state that there have been no subsequent negotiations with the French Government, and Her Majesty's Government consider that the agreement between this country and France respecting the New Hebrides is still in force.

Enclosure No. 2.

[The *Times*, Tuesday, 31st March, 1885.]

HOUSE OF COMMONS, Monday, 30th March.

The Western Pacific Commission.

MR. GORST asked the First Lord of the Treasury whether the attention of Her Majesty's Government had been directed to the report of the Western Pacific Commission of the 16th October, 1883, in which the following passages occur: "The present arrangements for the control of British subjects and the administration of justice among the islands of the Western Pacific are highly unsatisfactory;" "any considerable delay in placing upon a more satisfactory footing the control over British subjects in the Western Pacific will be perilous, and in all probability attended with calamitous results." To the published reports of German officials on the labour traffic, carried on under the British flag—*e.g.*, that of the German Consul at the Marshall Islands: "I have made the

most exact inquiries, and have arrived at the conclusion that the laws which have been enacted and which are specially stringent for vessels from Fiji are simply evaded, and that the labour traffic in New Britain and New Ireland is, with few exceptions, clean slave trading, as bad as any that was ever carried on in Africa;” that of Captain Karcher, of the German Navy—“The labour traffic is nothing else but slave trading. In it the captains of vessels not only buy persons from the chiefs for firearms and even breechloaders with ammunition, but they entice persons on board who come alongside in their canoes to trade and then detain them, or even simply kidnap the crew of a canoe met with on the high seas;” whether Her Majesty’s Government were prepared to accept the repeated offers of the German Government to come to an “understanding for the common or identic control of the labour traffic” in the Western Pacific; whether it was intended to despatch a man-of-war among the islands from which labour is recruited during the labour-trade season—i.e., from May to October of the present year; and what other steps, if any, Her Majesty’s Government intended to take to carry out any of the recommendations of the Western Pacific Commission.

Lord E. FITZMAURICE.—Yes. Her Majesty’s Government are aware of the statements to which the honourable and learned member refers. An Anglo-German Commission, consisting of Dr. Krauel, the German Consul-General in Sydney, and Mr. Thurston, the Colonial Secretary of Fiji, both of whom are now in London, is about to consider this question and to make recommendations for joint or identical action by Great Britain and Germany for the control of the labour traffic. Her Majesty’s ships will give all practicable assistance to the High Commissioner in supervising the labour traffic and preventing abuses in it, but cannot be permanently stationed at any particular places. Until the Anglo-German Commission has reported it will not be possible to decide how far and in what manner effect can be given to the recommendations of the Western Pacific Commission.

No. 5.

The SECRETARY of STATE to Governor Sir W. F. D. JERVOIS, G.C.M.G., C.B.

SIR,—

Downing Street, 18th May, 1885.

I have had the honour to receive your Despatch No. 43 of the 28th of March, transmitting a memorial addressed to me by the Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Otago on behalf of the Synod, respecting the New Hebrides, together with a memorandum from the Premier of New Zealand on the subject. A.-1., 1885, No. 36.

The memorialists fear that the annexation of these islands by France would bring about a state of things highly undesirable in the interests of the natives and of British subjects residing in the group, and express a hope that Great Britain will either annex them or assume a protectorate over them, or will secure their independence.

You will be so good as to inform the memorialists that Her Majesty’s Government will not lose sight of the considerations which have been brought forward in the memorial before me, and at the same time draw their attention, as representing the views of Her Majesty’s Government, to the statement made in Parliament by the Under-Secretary of State for this department on the 12th of March, of which a report will be found in the *London Times* of the 13th, from which it will be seen that any proposal having for its object the annexation of the New Hebrides to France would never be entertained by this office without consulting the Australian colonies, and without securing conditions satisfactory to those colonies: and, further, that no Government of this country would ever think of giving over the New Hebrides to France without taking care that they would never become a penal settlement.

I have, &c.,

Governor Sir W. F. D. Jervois, G.C.M.G., C.B.

DERBY.

