

1885.
NEW ZEALAND.

SIR F. DILLON BELL AND THE AGENT-GENERALSHIP.

[In Continuation of A.—6, Session II., 1884.]

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

No. 1.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Government Offices, Wellington, 10th August, 1884.

I desire, before quitting office, to compliment you upon the earnest and efficient manner in which you have discharged the duties of the Agent-Generalship.

2. Those duties have been more than ordinarily numerous and important, apart from the routine of your department; but, whether as regards loan negotiations, inscription of stock, the confederation and annexation question, or the very important branch of the latter relating to French criminals, you have shown a readiness and a command of the subjects which have been a material assistance to the Ministry, and of the greatest advantage to the colony.

3. I have much pleasure in thus performing what is, indeed, an incumbent duty, and leaving upon record the expression of my opinion that, as Agent-General for the colony, you have deserved the best thanks of the Government and people of New Zealand; and of my gratification at having been able, so far as the retiring Ministry have had it in their power, to secure that you shall continue to hold the office until the end of 1886.

I have, &c.,

Sir F. Dillon Bell, K.C.M.G., &c., London.

H. A. ATKINSON.

No. 2.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 10th October, 1884.

I received in due course the letter which the late Prime Minister did me the honour to address to me on the 10th August, before relinquishing office, in which he was pleased to speak in too favourable terms of such humble services as I have been able to render to the colony as Agent-General.

I trust you will permit me to ask the favour of your conveying to Major Atkinson the deep sense I entertain of the generosity which prompted his letter; and also of your allowing this my grateful acknowledgment of it to be recorded in your office.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. Major ATKINSON.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 10th October, 1884.

I am unable to express to you as I should wish the feeling with which I received the letter which you did me the honour to address to me on the 10th August; but I take the liberty of enclosing you a copy of one I am sending to the present Prime Minister, wherein I have asked him to let my acknowledgment of your generosity be kept among the records of the colony.

It will ever be a cherished remembrance with me that throughout my service under the three Governments of Sir John Hall, Sir Frederick Whitaker, and yourself, I was honoured by their official confidence and support. But for their personal courtesy and consideration, which lightened every task, and would only place a generous interpretation on what I did, I really do not know in what words to say how grateful I have been and am.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. Major Atkinson, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

No. 3

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 22nd October, 1885.

I had the honour to receive to-day your telegram informing me, with reference to my letter of the 8th September, No. 394, that your Government had announced in the House of Representatives that they were of opinion the late Ministers had been entitled to renew my appointment as Agent-General, and that a special ratification by Parliament was not necessary; also that particulars on the subject had been sent to me by the then preceding (October) mail.

It is now my duty to wait for the receipt of your letter. I trust I may be permitted, however, to express, in the meantime, a hope that the despatch of that letter by you will not have interposed to prevent your laying mine of the 8th September before the House.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

No. 4.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

TRY arrange New Zealand may have option annexing or confederating Samoa under Bill last year. Our instructions your actions wired colonial newspapers. Consider this undesirable. Endeavour arrange keep strictly confidential matters under negotiation.

ROBERT STOUT,

22nd October, 1884.

No. 5.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 22nd October, 1884.

It was with no small concern that I learnt, from your telegram received this morning, that not only my own acts, but even your instructions to me, had been made the subject of Press telegrams in the colonial newspapers.

Certainly there never has been the slightest authority or foundation for it by me; and I have a perfect confidence that no one among my officers has disclosed a word of what he has learnt in this office. I can only conjecture that, in some unguarded way, the fact of my having received orders of some kind from you had got abroad. It was, of course, necessary for me to make my colleagues, the other Agents-General, acquainted with the general tenor of your instructions to me about the Pacific question: indeed, it has all along been a point of honour among ourselves to have no concealment, as was manifestly necessary, because no concert whatever would have been possible on any other condition: and I know that the Press reporters were all the more eager to get an inkling of what I had been ordered to do, because they had themselves been busy with spurious messages of a supposed discord between the Agents-General, and especially of a want of harmony between Mr. Murray-Smith and myself.

This inquisitiveness of the gentlemen connected with the Press is, of course, very difficult to defeat; and most of the other Governments have been greatly annoyed by the appearance of telegrams similar to those to which you refer, while every Agent-General has had special reasons to be more than ever guarded with the reporters. But long experience on the subject has only shown me how certain it is, with a few of them, though certainly not with all, that, where information is denied to them, they will invent it.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

No. 6.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 29th November, 1884.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 29th September, enclosing an extract from *Hansard* relating to my continuance in the office of Agent-General.

While tendering to you my respectful thanks for your letter, I am not able to concur in the view taken by your Government of Major Atkinson's proposal to me of the 24th May; and I cannot but feel that all that has passed in the House since that time leaves me personally in a position very unfortunate for me, and one which I would not have accepted for a moment if I had known what it would be.

I am so unwilling, however, to refer again to personal feelings, which can be of no consequence to the colony, that the most respectful course for me to pursue is to say nothing more on the subject.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

No. 7.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Government Offices, Wellington, 6th December, 1884.

I have the honour to inform you that your letter No. 443, of the 10th October, was duly received, and that the Premier at once complied with the request made therein by forwarding copy of the letter to Major Atkinson.

I have, &c.,

Sir F. Dillon Bell, K.C.M.G.,

P. A. BUCKLEY,

Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

In the absence of the Premier.

No. 8.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 19th December, 1884.

I have the honour to inform you, in reply to your letter of the 22nd October, that your letter of the 8th September, addressed to the Premier, was duly presented to the Assembly, in compliance with your request.

You will probably have received the paper from the Government Printer, but a copy of it is appended.

Sir F. Dillon Bell, K.C.M.G.,
Agent-General, &c.

I have, &c.,
JULIUS VOGEL,
In the absence of the Premier.

No. 9.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 19th December, 1884.

I have the honour to inform you of the receipt of your letter of the 22nd October, addressed to the Premier, respecting a telegram sent to you relative to intelligence that was being published in London, and telegraphed to the colony, on the subject of instructions, &c., forwarded hence regarding the confederation and annexation question.

2. From whatever source obtained, it is a fact that information was being published as to all our negotiations on the subject; and thence arose the necessity for the telegram. Since it was sent, less intelligence of the sort has appeared.

3. The Government, of course, accept, in the fullest sense, the explanation given in your letter; but there can be no doubt that the reporters were receiving hints from some one who knew what was being done and proposed.

Sir F. Dillon Bell, K.C.M.G.,
Agent-General, &c.

I have, &c.,
JULIUS VOGEL,
In the absence of the Premier.

No. 10.

The PREMIER to the UNDER-SECRETARY for IMMIGRATION.

Memorandum for the Under-Secretary for Immigration.

I wish to put on record what I understood to be your statement to me regarding correspondence with the Agent-General. In one letter of the Agent-General I noticed a reference to "a long series of unofficial letters." I understood from you that there is no record of any such correspondence in the Government offices. The Minister of Immigration seems to have been in the practice of writing unofficial letters to the Agent-General, and, if he kept copies of these, you have not got them.

21st August, 1884.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 11.

The UNDER-SECRETARY for IMMIGRATION to the PREMIER.

Memorandum for the Hon. Mr. Stout.

IN reply to your memorandum of this day's date, in which you state that you wish to put on record what you understood to be my statement to you regarding correspondence with the Agent-General, as you noticed in one letter from the Agent-General a reference to "a long series of unofficial letters," I have to state that I am aware that Mr. Rolleston did write private letters to Sir F. D. Bell, in which I know there were allusions to official matters, because Mr. Rolleston sometimes read to me portions of these letters. I have not got copies of these letters.

Immigration Department, Wellington, 21st August, 1884.

H. J. H. ELIOTT,
Under-Secretary.

No. 12.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 31st October, 1884.

I beg to transmit to you herewith the copy of letter I have addressed to the Hon. Mr. Rolleston, as I do not think it would be right for me to address a letter to a late Minister on any matter relating to this department without making the Government acquainted with it.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
F. D. BELL.

Enclosure.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. Mr. ROLLESTON.

DEAR MR. ROLLESTON,—

London, 30th October, 1884.

In reading the *Hansards* that came to me by the last mail, I observe that, during the debate on the Address in Reply last August, Mr. Stout said that most important matters dealing with immigration, with the steam service, and with instructions to the Agent-General, had been conducted by private correspondence, of which he could find no record in the office.

I think it due to you that I should state that the Prime Minister's censure, so far as the fact is concerned, of there having been any unofficial correspondence, can only apply to myself and not to you. I think Mr. Stout must have intended to refer to the six semi-official letters which I wrote to you, between the 22nd December and 14th February last, upon several matters connected with the steam service and immigration.

Those letters were not written in consequence of any instructions from you, and certainly not with any idea that it would even be agreeable for you to receive them. The reason for their being written was simply this: the generosity with which, allowing as you did for the many difficulties against which I had to contend, you had left the arrangements relating to immigration to me, was appreciated by me all the more because I doubted very much whether the line I was taking was the one which, had you chosen to send me express instructions, you would have laid down yourself. Under these circumstances it seemed to me that it was your clear right to know all that was taking place, although much of it was necessarily of a kind which could not possibly be stated in public despatches, and I therefore sent you the particulars I did in those letters, not with any idea that your views would be the same as mine, and certainly not with any wish to defend the course I was taking, but simply because I thought it was your right to know everything that I was doing. Whatever blame may properly attach to my having written those letters is blame which belongs to me alone, and which I feel bound to do all I can to take entirely to myself as soon as it seems to be in any way imputed to me.

I need hardly say that you are at perfect liberty to make any use you think proper of this letter. I am sending a copy of it to the Prime Minister.

Hon. W. Rolleston, &c.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

No. 13.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 3rd January, 1885.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 500, of the 31st October last.

2. It is, I think, rather unusual for an Agent-General to interfere respecting debates in Parliament in which his conduct is not reviewed. The charge I made was against the late Minister for Immigration, and I think that he should have been able to give any required explanation.

3. You are under a misapprehension in assuming that any blame was cast upon you. What I protested against was that orders or directions were, as I was informed, given by the Minister for Immigration to the Agent-General, of which no record was kept in the Immigration Department. I admit, to the fullest extent, that confidential correspondence must pass between Ministers and the Agent-General, but where such correspondence relates to Government business a proper record of it should be left in the department for the use of future Ministers.

Sir F. D. Bell, K.C.M.G.,

Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT STOUT.