

1886.

NEW ZEALAND.

PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF NEW HEBRIDES BY FRANCE

(FURTHER PAPERS RELATING TO THE).

[In continuation of A.—5, 1886.]

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

No. 35.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 24th March, 1886.

In my letter of the 24th February, No. 233, I referred very briefly to the interview which A.—5, No. 6. had taken place between Lord Granville and the Agents-General in connection with the New Hebrides. I now beg permission to send you the notes I prepared of that interview.

On the 18th instant the Secretary of State received a telegram from the Governor, in reply to the joint telegram sent by the Agents-General to their Governments on the 24th February, immediately after our interview with Lord Granville. His Excellency's message was to the effect that, while the Government continued to entertain strong objection to the annexation of the New Hebrides by France, the aspect of the question might become changed if France, in addition to the Ambassador's proposal about the cessation of the convict system, would give up the Island of Rapa to England. I understand that Lord Granville has not yet received answers from all the colonies; but, if the Australian Governments should be disposed to take the same view as New Zealand, the door would of course be opened to further negotiations with the Government of the Republic. A.—5, No. 7.

I take this opportunity of enclosing you a copy of a telegram which was sent by the Prime Minister of Victoria to Mr. Murray Smith on the 13th instant, after a conference with Mr. Griffith. Confidential. Mr. Gillies stated that he and Mr. Griffith had agreed upon a telegram to be submitted to the other colonies, and that South Australia had expressed a desire to act with them, but that no answer had yet been received from New South Wales and New Zealand. The tenor of this telegram was that the colonies assembled in Federal Council (except Fiji, which could not be communicated with) had insuperable objections to any alteration in the status of the New Hebrides in the direction of their annexation to France, because if France could not get an increase of territory she would very soon have to relinquish entirely the relegation of criminals to the Pacific; that, if she did not relinquish it, the legislative power of the Australasian Colonies must be exercised to protect their interests; and that under these circumstances no advantage, but on the contrary very considerable injury, would be derived from accepting the proposal of the French Ambassador.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

Enclosure.

NOTES of an INTERVIEW between EARL GRANVILLE, K.G., and the HIGH COMMISSIONER for CANADA, and AGENTS-GENERAL for the AUSTRALASIAN COLONIES, 23rd February, 1886.

SIR ARTHUR BLYTH, senior Agent-General, informed Lord Granville that the Agent-General for New Zealand had been desired to explain the reasons for which the interview had been requested, and the present position of the New Hebrides question so far as it was understood by the Governments of Australasia. The following is a brief summary of the points submitted to the Secretary of State.

Lord Granville was requested to observe that the Agents-General were now accompanied for the first time by the High Commissioner for Canada. The Dominion desired, upon the completion of the railway from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans through British territory, to become more closely united with Australasia in questions affecting the destiny of the Pacific Islands; and Lord Granville, on his accession to office, would take note with satisfaction of the new ties bringing together the great colonies in both hemispheres, for interests which their Governments now claimed to possess in common.

There were several questions connected with the islands on which the respective Governments would probably submit their separate views to the Secretary of State; but there were two on which they were all of one mind—namely, the relegation of *récidivistes*, and the maintenance of the existing agreement with France relating to the New Hebrides. It would, no doubt, seem necessary to