

No. 63.

The PREMIER to the MODERATOR of PRESBYTERY, Napier.

HAVE received protest of Presbytery against annexation of New Hebrides from Captain Russell. The matter is now engaging the attention of Parliament.

Wellington, 21st May, 1886.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 64.

The PREMIER to the CHAMBER of COMMERCE, Invercargill.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 21st May, 1886.

I have been directed by the Hon. the Premier to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th instant, stating that the Invercargill Chamber of Commerce desired to record a protest against the proposed annexation of the New Hebrides by France, and to inform you, for the information of the Chamber, that the matter is now engaging the attention of Parliament.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Chamber of Commerce, Invercargill.

ALEX. WILLIS.

No. 65.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 22nd May, 1886.

Since I wrote to you last regarding the New Hebrides question the proposals of the French Ambassador have been widely discussed in the colony. I have not yet received answers from all the various Presbyterian bodies, but from those that I have I am of opinion that the Presbyterian Church will not consent to the New Hebrides being annexed.

Both in Victoria and New South Wales the Presbyterian Church have urged the Government not to consent to any alteration of the *status quo*, and it seems to me that, even if convictism is to be continued, the Church will sooner submit to that than to their missions being disturbed.

The matter came before Parliament on Wednesday last, when Sir George Grey moved a series of resolutions, afterwards withdrawn, which I enclose. I also enclose the report of the debate that took place on them. You will observe that the majority of those who spoke strongly supported the position that, whatever happened, no concessions should be made to France. I am aware, however, that there are many in the House who say that we should confine ourselves to New Zealand, and take no interest in the Pacific question whatever. To them the obtaining of an island more or less is of no consequence. The general feeling, however, seems to be that, even if France made an agreement not to send *récidivistes* to the Pacific, the agreement might not be binding on future French Governments, and that, consequently, the result would be that the giving the New Hebrides to France would only intensify the evil of convictism in the Pacific. The Committee will meet next week, and I shall forward you by wire the results of its deliberations. In my own opinion, the resolution that will be passed by the Committee will be of a general character, and will oppose any concession being given to France.

If the result of the matter is, in the end, that we do not obtain Opara and the Cook group, I am afraid the colonists of New Zealand will yet deeply regret the position.

I have, &c.,

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

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 66.

AUCKLAND PUBLIC MEETING to the PREMIER.

LARGE meeting representatives all denominations resolved to oppose cession of Hebrides to France. Petitions being largely signed.

Auckland, 25th May, 1886.

RAINSFORD BAVIN, Chairman.

T. M. HAULTAIN.

No. 67.

The CLERK of PRESBYTERIAN SYNOD of OTAGO and SOUTHLAND to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Roslyn, Dunedin, 25th May, 1886.

I have the honour to forward to you the accompanying resolutions *re* annexation of the New Hebrides by France, adopted this evening at a meeting of members of Synod gathered from all parts of the Synod's bounds. The meeting was representative of both ministers and elders. The resolutions were adopted unanimously.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier.

WM. BANNERMAN, Clerk of Synod.

Enclosure.

RESOLUTIONS anent ANNEXATION of the NEW HEBRIDES by FRANCE adopted by MEMBERS of the PRESBYTERIAN SYNOD of OTAGO and SOUTHLAND, at a Meeting held in Dunedin on the 25th May, 1886.

THAT the members of Synod now present express their satisfaction with the Premier's recognition of the interest which this Church has in the settlement of the question of the annexation of the New Hebrides by France.