

1886.
NEW ZEALAND.

FEDERATION AND ANNEXATION.

(FURTHER PAPERS RELATING TO THE RÉCIDIVISTE BILL.)

[In continuation of A.—4*, 1885.]

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

No. 1.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 21st July, 1885.

In my letter of the 15th instant, No. 885, I mentioned the interview between the Confidential Secretary of State and the Agents-General upon the Récidiviste Act.

In asking for that interview, it was not in any expectation of Her Majesty's present Ministers being able to make a categorical statement of their views so soon after taking office. But, as the question had been so often under the consideration of English statesmen of both parties, we felt sure that Lord Salisbury's Government would not be without a general opinion upon the events of the last two years, and we wished not to lose an opportunity of marking time, and obtaining as early an indication as possible of what that opinion was.

As on previous occasions, my colleagues did me the honour to request that I should initiate the conference. After tracing the history of the question to the present time, I directed Secretary Colonel Stanley's attention to two points which appeared to be of immediate importance.

In the first place, the conversation which took place last month between Her Majesty's Ambassador at Paris and M. de Freycinet certainly showed a distinct advance in the direction we had always believed the question must tend to. For the first time the French Government had received, without immediate objection, Lord Lyons's renewed request for the exclusion of New Caledonia from the localities where relegation should take place; and I took occasion to repeat our acknowledgment of the deep obligations which every Australasian Colony is under to the Ambassador for the steadfast persistence and consummate tact with which he has so often advocated our cause. Colonel Stanley's notice was also called to the cumulative evidence recently afforded of the adverse character of French public opinion to the scheme, and to the fact that this adverse opinion was certainly growing. Under these circumstances, it would perhaps be best to let the inherent difficulties continue to develop themselves which already stood in the way of the French Executive respecting the regulations yet to be made by them; and to let Lord Lyons himself judge, during the six months that must elapse before the promulgation of those regulations, how best to influence the French Government afresh. In the meantime, Colonel Stanley was reminded of the warm expressions of sympathy we had so often received from Lord Derby, and of our hope that the same feelings really animated Her Majesty's present Ministers.

In the second place, I was desired by my colleagues to call Colonel Stanley's especial attention to the question of the colonial legislation likely to follow upon the passing of the French Act, and to express our wish for as definite a statement as possible of the views entertained by the present Government on the subject. Now that the Federal Council Bill was to be passed, the opportunity would at last be afforded of enacting a united law for preventing the influx of French *récidivistes*: at the same time, if we could at once inform our Governments that the present Ministry held practically the same views as their predecessors, the colonies might perhaps be willing to adjourn repressive legislation until the character of the executive regulations, and the system of relegation itself, were known. We assured Colonel Stanley of the continued determination of all the colonies not to be subjected to the dangers of an invasion by French criminals; and, while we recognized that it would be improper on our parts to put hypothetical questions respecting the course which Her Majesty's Government might hereafter be called upon to take, and acknowledged the necessity for the Imperial authority being unfettered by specific promises