

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

explain why so sudden an anxiety had arisen in Australasia on the latter question, when so many declarations had been made that the independence of the group would be respected. It was now nearly three years since the Agents-General had laid a respectful remonstrance before Lord Derby against the threatened increase of French transportation to New Caledonia and the adjacent isles. No secret was then made in the French Chambers of the desire of France to possess herself of the New Hebrides, and Lord Granville would no doubt remember how plainly it was said by prominent speakers that, if Australia succeeded in persuading the British Government to annex New Guinea, “*nous saurons à notre tour nous emparer des Nouvelles-Hébrides.*” No doubt renewed assurances had since been given by France that the informal agreement made some years ago between Her Majesty’s Government and the Government of the Republic would not be interfered with; and the new anxiety which had arisen on the subject in Australasia might perhaps have appeared unreasonable, but for two events which had happened very lately, and which were in fact the immediate cause of the present representation being made.

While the New Guinea question was still under consideration by Her Majesty’s Government, the Colonial Governments had expressed a strong wish to be consulted before steps were taken affecting the relations of Australasia to the islands of the Pacific. In answer to a question in the House of Commons [20th March, 1885] about New Guinea, Mr. Gladstone said that, while Her Majesty’s Government would endeavour to secure the interests of the colonies in transactions with foreign countries, it was not possible to do more than consult their wishes. And, as regarded the New Hebrides, Lord Derby promised, in his despatch of the 21st April, 1885, that no proposal having for its object the annexation of the group by France would ever be entertained by Her Majesty’s Government without consulting the colonies, and that no Government of this country would ever think of giving over the New Hebrides to France without taking care that they should not become a penal settlement. But now two things had happened to cause a new apprehension. In the case of Raiatea and the other islands to leeward of Tahiti the colonies suddenly learnt that the Declaration of 1847, by which England and France had mutually bound themselves “never” to take possession of the group, was abrogated, while the Island of Rapa, to the possession of which the Colonial Governments had attached so much importance, was to be retained by France. And in the case of the New Hebrides the colonies learnt with equal suddenness, from the White Book recently presented to the German Reichstag, that a convention had been entered into between the French and German Governments, pledging Germany to do nothing to hinder France from eventually taking possession of the group. Such an engagement on the part of those two Powers had a sinister aspect for the colonies, especially when they remembered what had been taking place at Samoa. For the same thing that had happened at Raiatea had happened at Samoa. A French officer had, without direct authority, hoisted the tricolor at Raiatea, and it had never come down. A German officer had, without direct authority, hoisted the German flag at the Harbour of Apia, and it had never come down. How could the colonies feel sure that the same thing would not happen at the New Hebrides? That group was excluded from the Western Pacific Acts, and no law existed there for the protection of any British interests; the missions, where so many devoted English lives had been given and so much money spent for twenty years, had no security; and, while English trade and settlement were discouraged, French companies were steadily pushing their acquisitions and seizing upon every point of vantage in the group. Things might soon drift until they reached the point when the same necessity would be pleaded of protecting foreign interests as had been pleaded at New Guinea, Raiatea, and Samoa; and the colonies feared that they might learn one day, as suddenly as they had learnt in those cases, not only that the islands were gone, but that they were gone with a secret purpose of extending there the penal settlements of France: for the colonies could not but remember how powerless every effort had seemed to be to rescue the Pacific Islands from the evils of transportation. The High Commissioner, not less than the Agents-General, gladly took this opportunity of renewing to Lord Granville the assurance, so often given to his Lordship and to Lord Lyons, of how thoroughly the colonies appreciated their constant help, their repeated appeals to the French Government, and the improvement they had caused in the original *récidiviste* scheme. Yet, in spite of everything, the scheme was being pressed on, nor were there wanting signs of its immediate application to New Caledonia being contemplated. Lord Granville would not think the colonies were unmindful of the promise given by Lord Derby. But the Colonial Governments hoped it would not seem unreasonable to ask his Lordship to renew and confirm that promise on the part of the present Government, seeing how deep had been their disappointment in the events that had successively taken place in Pacific Islands affairs. In three short years they had seen the things they most desired and valued slip away, while the things they most objected to and dreaded had come to pass. Half of New Guinea was gone, New Britain and the adjacent islands were gone, Raiatea was gone, Rapa was refused, and Samoa threatened; the *récidiviste* scheme was law, soon to bring with it grave dangers of international quarrel, since the persistency of France would be met by an equal determination on the part of the colonies; what remained of the Pacific Islands seemed fast passing under foreign dominion; and soon the power confided by the Imperial Parliament to the Federal Council of legislating for the relations of Australasia to the islands would be merely a phrase.

LORD GRANVILLE, in reply, congratulated the Australasian Colonies upon the accession of Canada in questions relating to the Pacific, and welcomed, on the part of Her Majesty’s Government, this new sign of a common interest and sympathy between the great dependencies of the Empire. With regard to the *récidiviste* question, he appreciated the reference which had been made to his own constant efforts, while at the Foreign Office, to support the colonies against the *récidiviste* scheme: indeed, he might say that he had “bombarded” Her Majesty’s Ambassador at Paris with remonstrances on the subject, which Lord Lyons had with such ability and tact pressed upon successive French Ministers. With regard to the New Hebrides, he confirmed and renewed the

promise that nothing should be done by Her Majesty's Government to change the existing engagements between England and France without previous consultation with the colonies. An event of some importance, however, had happened within the last few days: the French Ambassador, in a conversation with Lord Rosebery, had made a proposal that, if France were permitted to annex the New Hebrides, transportation to any French possession in the Pacific should entirely cease. Lord Rosebery had replied that Her Majesty's Government had promised not to take any step regarding these islands except after consultation with the Australasian Governments, which was quite recognized by Mr. Waddington; and it was therefore necessary that the offer now made on the part of France should be brought to the cognizance of the colonies. This should be done by a confidential telegram from the Agents-General to their Governments, with the request that the views of the latter should be communicated to the Colonial Office as soon as possible. Of course, if the offer of the French Government were entertained, adequate steps would be taken to secure the missions against injury, and to extend to British subjects generally full protection for settlement and trade, as had been done in the case of Raiatea.

The Agents-General thanked Lord Granville for the promise he had been pleased to give, which they did not doubt would be satisfactory to all their Governments; and they engaged to telegraph at once the important proposal just made by the French Ambassador. In taking leave, they desired to express their thanks for the patience and courtesy Lord Granville had shown to them during the interview.

No. 36.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 25th March, 1886.

In your telegram of the 19th instant, respecting the New Hebrides, you desired me to obtain **No. 17** an answer from the Colonial Office as to their intentions regarding Rarotonga; but I am not able to send you an answer yet, as the question is still under consideration.

In the meanwhile, however, I ascertained that, with regard to the small Kermadec group of islands, to the north of New Zealand, there would be no objection to their immediate annexation to New Zealand, if a formal request to that effect were transmitted by the Governor to the Secretary of State. I accordingly sent you a telegram to that effect, copy of which is annexed; and upon receiving your reply this morning, pointing out that the Governor had already made the desired demand in His Excellency's Despatch No. 121, of the 18th November last, I communicated privately **A.—1, No. 10** with the Colonial Office to ascertain whether anything else was now required, but have not yet had a reply.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure 1.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

. . . . KERMADECS: Would annex upon formal request Governor. Rarotonga still being discussed.

19th March, 1886.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure 2.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

KERMADEC: Governor already asked annexation — Despatch 121, 18th November. Is more required?

24th March, 1886.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 37.

The MODERATOR of the ASSEMBLY of the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH of NEW ZEALAND to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Sydenham, 24th April, 1886.

I have the honour to transmit the accompanying resolutions, which I trust shall receive the favourable attention of your Government.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. Robert Stout, Premier of New Zealand.

T. R. CAIRNS,

Moderator of Assembly.

Enclosure 1.

St. Andrew's Church, Auckland, Tuesday, 6th April, 1886.

WHICH day the Presbytery of Auckland met and was constituted.

Inter alia: On the motion of Thomas Peacock, Esq., M.H.R., it was resolved, "That the Presbytery views with great regret and dissatisfaction the announcement that the Imperial authorities are entertaining the question of allowing France to take possession of the New Hebrides Islands, and that the Agent-General of this colony in London is represented as favourable to this procedure." "That, considering the lives sacrificed and the large sums of money spent in missionary operations on these islands by the Presbyterian Churches of Australia and New Zealand, and the success which has attended these labours in christianizing and elevating the native population, and rendering life and property comparatively safe, and, further, that the controlling of these fertile islands by a foreign Power would be likely to neutralize the beneficent efforts put forth, as well as act

prejudicially to the interests of British commerce and colonization, this Presbytery urges upon the Government of New Zealand the necessity of taking a firm stand and supporting the other Australasian Governments who are now protesting against such annexation by France." "That a copy of the foregoing resolutions be forwarded to the Very Reverend the Moderator of the General Assembly for immediate transmission to the Government, either singly or conjointly with other representations from southern portions of the Church."

Extracted from the records of the Presbytery of Auckland by

ROBT. SOMMERVILLE, Presbytery Clerk.

Enclosure 2.

RESOLUTIONS regarding the Annexation of the New Hebrides by France, adopted by the Presbytery of Christchurch at a Meeting held on the 21st April, 1886.

"THAT the Presbytery, having had its attention called to the fact that the Imperial Government was likely to look with favour on the annexation of the New Hebrides by France, although the Australasian colonists have always been led to suppose that the independence of the islands would be maintained, resolves that the Government of New Zealand be earnestly requested to join with the other Australasian Governments in a vigorous protest against the annexation, and to use all constitutional means to prevent its accomplishment." And, "That the Government of New Zealand be respectfully informed that the Presbyterian Churches have maintained missionaries on several of these islands for many years at very considerable expense; that the missionaries have been very successful in their labours, and, in addition to preaching the Gospel, have given much attention to the education of the people and the introduction among them of the habits and customs of civilized society, one result of which has been a considerable amount of produce exported from the islands; and that the Presbytery is satisfied that, even though the promise by France of not sending convicts to the islands were carried out, the annexation would be disastrous to the work from which such satisfactory results are being secured."

No. 38.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

(Telegram.)

RAROTONGA, I believe, annexed, provided Hebrides question settled; but, while France continues prohibited annexing Hebrides, England cannot annex new groups, except Kermadecs, where Admiral now ordered hoist flag, and, when Parliament address Queen, added New Zealand. Hebrides—Lord Granville sending despatch, Governors favour accepting French offer. I believe attitude Sydney hastening decision. Can you arrange with Sydney that Samuel, myself, act together provided following objects attained? Firstly, immediate abolition convictism throughout Pacific; secondly, equal trading rights like Raiatea; thirdly, adequate safeguard religious freedom and protection missions; fourth, Rapa ceded; fifthly, Rarotonga annexed.

24th April, 1886.

F. D. BELL.

No. 39.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

(Telegram.)

NEW HEBRIDES: Must defer answering telegram few days. Consulting Presbyterians, try obtain consent.

27th April, 1886.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 40.

The PREMIER to the MODERATOR of the ASSEMBLY of the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH of NEW ZEALAND.

REVEREND SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, New Zealand, 27th April, 1886.

No. 37.

1. I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 24th instant, enclosing resolutions passed by the Presbyteries of Auckland and Christchurch on the subject of the proposed annexation of the New Hebrides by France. In reply, I desire to bring before you the position of the question in order that you may submit it to the Presbyteries of your Church.

2. I have first to state that the Government have continually opposed the acquisition by foreign Powers of any of the Pacific Islands. On numerous occasions they have, by memoranda to His Excellency the Governor, and by letters to the Agent-General, protested against such acquisition.

3. The Government recognize the great efforts that have been made by the Presbyterian Church in the New Hebrides group, and are aware that it has made it a practice not to go into a mission-field where other Churches have been at work. They also recognize the sacrifices of valuable lives and of money that the Presbyterian Church has made for the benefit of the inhabitants of these islands. In a letter to the Agent-General, dated the 27th February last, I brought this matter specially before him, in order that he might mention it to the Colonial Office in England.

A.—5, No. 8.

4. You are aware that the negotiation that has been proceeding between France and England does not merely concern the relinquishment of the New Hebrides to France. There is much more involved in the proposal. Of first importance is the question Her Majesty's Government put to the colonies: Do they desire to see the abolition of convictism in the Pacific?

5. The French Government, after long parliamentary discussion, have come to the conclusion to resume sending *récidivistes* to New Caledonia. This continued deportation of criminals not only casts a stain on the islands held by France in the Southern Seas, but affects most prejudicially the whole of the British Australasian possessions. Whatever law may be passed by the colonies to prohibit the landing of French convicts on their shores cannot effectually answer the purpose desired. Of course the tendency of such an influx of criminals is to lower the moral tone of the colonists. The convicts sent to New Caledonia comprise people hardened to crime, both by descent and education. If the foul blot of convictism could be removed, there would be an enormous gain to all the colonies; and the question the Presbyterian Church has to consider is, what sacrifice it is prepared to make to secure the inestimable advantage of putting an end for ever to the transportation of criminals to the Southern Seas.

6. It should be clearly understood that the proposals are not only that convicts shall not be deported to the New Hebrides if these islands are acquired by France, but also—

- (a.) That convicts shall not for all future time be sent to New Caledonia, nor to any of the French possessions in the South Pacific, and that this agreement shall be ratified by treaty.
- (b.) That the trade rights and commercial privileges granted to Frenchmen shall be also open to British subjects residing in or resorting to the New Hebrides group. This has been arranged regarding Raiatea, and a similar arrangement would be made regarding the New Hebrides.
- (c.) Adequate safeguards are to be provided that religious freedom will be maintained throughout the group, and that the present missions shall be protected in their property, their rights, and their privileges.
- (d.) That France shall cede to England the Island of Opara or Rapa, and also shall not stand in the way of Rarotonga, or rather the Cook or Hervey group, being annexed by England if the natives are willing.

7. You will recognize the enormous importance of the last-mentioned cessions when I state that the Cook or Hervey group has been civilized by English missionaries; that this group and Opara lie near the French territory of the Society and Austral Islands; and that, if they are not obtained, England has no outposts in the Eastern Pacific. From an Imperial point of view, supposing the question were not complicated with that of the Presbyterian Mission, there is no doubt whatever that it would be of far greater advantage to England to obtain Opara and the Hervey group than the New Hebrides group. I trust that your Church will carefully consider this point.

8. If the present negotiations were to cease it is quite possible the French Government might find a pretext, in special French interests alleged to be jeopardized, to annex the New Hebrides group without any of the concessions I have mentioned. The extent and nature of the justification of such a course would take years to discuss and unravel, and meanwhile the flag would fly. I do not suppose for one moment that your Church, or any of the people in the colonies, would in such an event urge Great Britain to go to war with France, nor, were England urged to do so, is it likely that heed would be given to such a recommendation.

9. I have endeavoured to place the position fairly before you. I do not undervalue the responsibility which is thrown upon you, nor the magnitude of the sacrifice to which you are asked to assent. I recognize that treaty engagements may possibly fail to so effectually secure you that liberty of action which the Church enjoys under the present *quasi*-British protection. I recognize that the exclusiveness of your missionary work may be impaired. I recognize also that, having engaged in your labours on the faith of the territory being denationalized, you have a right to protest against a change so subversive of the conditions under which you entered on your mission. I admit also that, in the face of your continued opposition, it is improbable the many British communities concerned will consent to the cession. I have felt it my duty to point out the contingency of the French taking the law in their own hands. But, in coming to a decision, I would rather you would consider that with you rests the power of assenting to the proposals under consideration, or of absolutely vetoing them. It would ill become me to lessen the heroism of any sacrifice you may decide to make. I see also the vast weight that the necessity of coming to a decision imposes on you. Nevertheless, the Church must accept its responsibilities, and it is called upon to decide between the interests of the two races. On the one hand, by consenting, it may impair the effectiveness of its efforts to bring the natives to a sense of religion and civilized usages; on the other, if it refuse, it must condemn the European races of all the territory in the Southern Seas to continue under the withering and baneful influences of near proximity to convict settlements constantly replenished with fresh criminals. The extent to which your usefulness to the natives may be lessened is uncertain; but there is no question of the moral harm the European races will sustain if your consent be withheld. You have to choose between a possible diminution of the good you are able to do to the natives, and the bestowal on the white population of a vast moral boon which will earn for your Church the gratitude of the colonists and their descendants for generations to come.

10. As I am in correspondence with the Agent-General, and with the Imperial Government, through His Excellency, on this subject, I hope you may be able to give me an early expression of the determination at which your Church arrives.

The Rev. T. R. Cairns, Sydneyham.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 41.

The PREMIER, Victoria, to the PREMIER, New Zealand.

NEW HEBRIDES: Referring your telegram 19th March, trust Bell is still maintaining firm attitude. Lord Granville having promised consult colonies prior to answering French proposal, everything now

rests with us. Surely all colonies can unite in strengthening hands of British Government in their efforts to protect our interests; and this we can only do by giving unanimous verdict against any concession, and against every compromise. If unanimous, or nearly so, success ought to be certain. Presume we can count on you both here and in London.

Melbourne, 28th April, 1886.

ALFRED DEAKIN,
(For the Premier.)

No. 42.

The PREMIER, New Zealand, to the PREMIER, Victoria.

NEW HEBRIDES: Matter is under consideration; and, after full Cabinet, will communicate with you.

29th April, 1886.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 43.

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

REVEREND SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 8th May, 1886.

No. 40.

I have the honour to forward herewith copy of a letter which I have addressed to the Rev. Mr. Cairns, Moderator of the General Assembly, Christchurch, on the subject of the proposed annexation of the New Hebrides by France. Will you be good enough to submit it to the Synod or other Church Court at as early a date as possible, for an expression of opinion?

I have, &c.,

Rev. W. Bannerman, Clerk of Synod,
Otago and Southland Presbyterian Church.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 44.

The PREMIER to the CLERK of the DUNEDIN PRESBYTERY.

REVEREND SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 8th May, 1886.

No. 31.

Referring to your letter of the 8th April, enclosing copy of minute of the Presbytery of Dunedin, dated 7th April, on the subject of the New Hebrides, I have now the honour to enclose copy of a letter which I have addressed to the Rev. Mr. Cairns, Moderator of the General Assembly, Christchurch, with a request that he will furnish me with an early expression of the determination at which the Church may arrive. Will you be good enough to bring the matter under the notice of the Dunedin Presbytery at your early convenience?

I have, &c.,

Rev. Alex. M. Finlayson, Clerk, Presbytery, New Zealand.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 44A.

The PREMIER, New Zealand, to the PREMIERS, Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 8th May, 1886.

No. 40.

I have the honour to enclose copy of a letter which I have addressed to the Moderator of the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand concerning the New Hebrides, and the attitude of the Presbyterian Church towards the proposed arrangement between England and France.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 45.

The PREMIER, Victoria, to the PREMIER, New Zealand.

I HAVE received a telegraphic summary of an important despatch addressed by Agent-General to Secretary of State. As it may interest you I send you a copy of Agent-General's telegram. I do not understand what he says in the concluding part as to a change of attitude of your Agent-General. Trust there is no misunderstanding. I fully understood that Bell was to be firm in opposing the cession. Telegram is as follows: "London, sixth May.—New Hebrides: Addressed thirtieth, long despatch Secretary of State for Colonies replying to Bramston's, the latter being distinctly in favour of French pretensions. In the first place, claimed that Griffith's telegram, supported by Thurston's, with your confirmation, conclusive as to decision federal colonies; argued then statutory authority Council under Federal Act, and acceptance that authority at Hobart. Cited Council's address to Queen. Referred to Derby's promise that islands would not be ceded unless on conditions satisfactory colonies. Present French overture, whether regarded as threat or bargain, confident colonies never yield. Referred former stories French flag: if in Pacific it become the symbol of convictism, colonies must protect themselves. Discussed various points urged by Bramston—labour, geographical position. Strongly stated missionary claims. Concluded citing various instructions your telegram. Since yours received, March nineteen, about to commence action especially with reference to New Zealand correspondence, when Bell informed Hoey he had received later cabled instructions contrary sense. Are you aware of change? If so, send instructions.—ACTING AGENT-GENERAL."

8th May, 1886.

D. GILLIES,
Premier,

No. 46.

The PREMIER, New Zealand, to the PREMIER, Victoria.

NEW HEBRIDES : Our view is that proposed agreement to cede New Hebrides on condition of convictism being stopped to all French possessions, Opara ceded, and Rarotonga to be open to British annexation, most favourable arrangement, and such as the colony should heartily approve if no objection stood in way. But we think that the Presbyterians have undeniable claims to object to cession, their missions having been formed on faith of denationalization ; and, before recommending proposal, we think their consent should be obtained. I have addressed letter to Church, recognizing No. 40. magnitude of sacrifices they would make, but appealing to them not to stand in the way of white population of Australasia obtaining priceless boon of stopping convict deportation to Pacific. I have No. 44A. sent you copy of my letter.

11th May, 1886.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 47.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

HEBRIDES : Take up this position : Cannot at present recommend cession, because Presbyterians established mission faith denationalization ; otherwise consider conditions most favourable. Have appealed to Church to consent.

11th May, 1886.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 48.

The PREMIER, Victoria, to the PREMIER, New Zealand.

Re New Hebrides : Your telegram states that the cession should be approved of if no objection stood in the way, but that you consider that the Presbyterians have undeniable claims to object. Am I correct in understanding that you will oppose French proposals unless Presbyterians waive their objection ?

11th May, 1886.

D. GILLIES,
Premier.

No. 49.

The PREMIER, New Zealand, to the PREMIER, Victoria.

I THINK you will best understand our position by seeing the telegram we have sent to our Agent-General, which is as follows : "Hebrides : Take up this position : Cannot at present recommend cession, because Presbyterians established mission faith denationalization ; otherwise consider conditions most favourable. Have appealed to Church to consent."

12th May, 1886.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 50.

The MODERATOR of the OAMARU PRESBYTERY to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Manse, Papakaio, Otago, 11th May, 1886.

On behalf of the Presbytery of Oamaru, I have the honour to send you the enclosed resolutions of Presbytery as its memorial ; and respectfully request you to lay the same before your Government, and transmit them to the Colonial Ministry of Britain.

I have, &c.,

JOHN STEVEN,
Moderator of Oamaru Presbytery.

The Hon. R. Stout, Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Enclosure.

THE Presbytery of Oamaru, having had their attention called to the subject of French empire in the New Hebrides, and its possible results, as seen in connection with a French settlement of convicts in New Caledonia, resolve : (1.) That the matter profoundly affects the interests of Christian missions which have been carried on in these islands for many years, with great success and at great cost, with privilege of martyrdom, on behalf of British and other Protestants, who have a natural claim upon the protection and favour of Great Britain in that region. (2.) The matter affects the moral and social order not only of that archipelago, but of all the islands of the Southern Ocean, with mainlands adjacent. For the preservation of that order there is need of the protectorate of some one Power practically omnipresent over that ocean, in a position of competency to superintend the general police of the whole region, in the interest of mankind. That, under certain conditions, might be accomplished through a joint protectorate of great Powers. But it might be made insuperably difficult by the establishment of any one imperial Power in the region which is not effectively present in the region all over. (3.) Irrespectively of patriotic attachment to our nation, and solicitude for its interest, we submit that the protectorate of the Southern Ocean is, in large measure, an office of Great Britain, which she cannot decline or abandon without dishonour as well as loss, and to which she is apparently called by an overruling Providence, in the interest of civilization and humanity. (4.) The Presbytery observes, with grateful satisfaction, the hitherto successful endeavours, for prevention or remedy of evils thus suggested, by the British Government. It gives them special gratification to observe, in this relation, the enlightened zeal and public spirit

of the Government of New Zealand; and they hereby resolve to send this and the above resolutions to the Hon. Robert Stout, Premier of New Zealand, as their memorial, to be laid before his Government, and transmitted to the Colonial Ministry of Britain.

Signed on behalf of the Presbytery by

JOHN STEVEN, Moderator.

No. 51.

MEMORANDUM from the PREMIER to Governor Sir W. F. D. JERVOIS, G.C.M.G.

No. 50.

THE Premier has the honour to forward the enclosed copy of resolutions passed by the Presbytery of Oamaru on the subject of the proposed annexation of the New Hebrides by France, and to recommend that they may be forwarded to the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

12th May, 1886.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 52.

The MODERATOR of the ASSEMBLY of the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH of NEW ZEALAND to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Sydenham, 12th May, 1886.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your reply to the resolutions of the Presbytery of Auckland and Christchurch *re* the New Hebrides. I desire, in the name of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, to thank you for your courtesy in this matter, and for your hearty recognition of the good services rendered by our Church to the natives of the New Hebrides. I have sent down a copy of your communication to each of our Presbyteries, and have requested them to give me an expression of their opinion on the points raised in it: these replies, representing the mind of our Church, I shall embody in a report which I shall forward to you at the earliest possible moment.

I have, &c.,

T. R. CAIRNS,

Moderator of Assembly.

The Hon. Robert Stout, Premier, Wellington.

No. 53.

The PREMIER to the MODERATOR of the OAMARU PRESBYTERY.

REVEREND SIR,—

14th May, 1886.

No. 50.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 11th instant, enclosing resolutions passed by the Presbytery of Oamaru relative to the proposed annexation of the New Hebrides by France, a copy of which I have forwarded to His Excellency the Governor, for transmission to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

No. 51.

No. 40.

I now enclose copy of a letter I have addressed to the Moderator of the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. Will you be good enough to bring it under the notice of your Presbytery as early as possible?

I have, &c.,

Rev. John Steven, Moderator, Oamaru Presbytery.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 54.

The CLERK, Dunedin Presbytery, to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Blueskin, Otago, 14th May, 1886.

No. 44.

No. 40.

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 8th instant on the subject of the New Hebrides, together with copy of a letter addressed by you to the Moderator of the General Assembly. A meeting of the Dunedin Presbytery has been called for Thursday first, the 20th instant, for consideration of your letter.

I have, &c.,

ALEX. M. FINLAYSON,

Clerk of Presbytery.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

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