

to me that any good would be done by getting this put on official record; but, now the question has been repeated in the House, I will make formal application, so as to get a definite answer for you to announce.

With regard to contractors for fresh meat to the Imperial troops in England being allowed to supply frozen mutton, I understand there is not so much difficulty, and I will do all I can to get the permission desired.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

#### No. 4.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 11th February, 1887.

Since writing to you on the 21st October last, No. 1,290, I have been in further private communication with the Imperial departments on the subject of the supplies of tinned and frozen meats for Her Majesty's forces, which has led to the correspondence of which copies are enclosed. I hope soon to get replies to my letters, when I shall address you again.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.

F. D. BELL.

#### Enclosure 1 in No. 4.

Mr. E. MACGREGOR to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Admiralty, S.W., 14th January, 1887.

I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to lay before you the following particulars, and to request that you will favour them with your advice on the subject.

2. At present, salt beef for the navy is obtained from the States of America, in accordance with the conditions of contract, copy of which is transmitted herewith,\* the curing of fresh meat at the Royal Victoria Yard, Deptford, having being given up for some years on account of cost, although it can be recommenced at any time if necessary.

3. Three years ago my Lords directed inquiries to be made by the Paymaster in Charge at Sydney as to the feasibility of opening up a fresh source of supply of this article in New Zealand; but the result of the trial was not satisfactory, inasmuch as the two samples sent Home were condemned as unfit for human food, and were sold to the soap-boilers for boiling down.

4. It was further found that the native woods were unfit for being used for salt-meat casks, and that American or Baltic timber must be imported into the colony for that purpose.

5. The Paymaster in Charge reported at the time that he had failed in obtaining tenders either from Dunedin, Christchurch, or Napier, and it further appeared that the meat sent Home had been put up in the height of a New Zealand summer.

6. My Lords are of opinion that the failure may have been due to want of knowledge of the resources and trade of the colony, and that, as much attention and capital seem to have been directed lately to sending meat Home to England, it may be in your power to assist them with your advice as to the best method of attaining the object they have in view.

7. I am to draw your particular attention to the conditions of the contract at present in force for supplies obtained from America in regard to packages and messing.

8. I am to add that the salt beef purchased for Her Majesty's ships on the Australian station gives satisfaction; but this is probably owing to the meat being newly packed and brought into early local consumption; whereas the salt beef which would be contracted for in New Zealand, if the trade of that country competed favourably with America, would remain some considerable time in the various dépôts at home and abroad before it would be brought into consumption. The quantity of salt beef bought annually may be taken as about 500,000lb.

I am, &c.,

Sir Francis D. Bell, K.C.M.G., C.B., Agent-General for New Zealand, 7, Westminster Chambers, S.W.

EVAN MACGREGOR.

#### Enclosure 2 in No. 4.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the SECRETARY to the ADMIRALTY.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, S.W., 31st January, 1887.

I have given careful consideration to your letter of the 14th instant relating to the supply of salt beef from New Zealand for Her Majesty's ships.

Having had the advantage of personal discussion with the Director of Victualling, I mentioned that a material point would be the term for which any contract would be allowed, supposing other conditions to be satisfactory to the Admiralty. Taking the total quantity of salt beef annually required at 500,000lb., and assuming the conditions to be insisted upon of the casks being made either of oak staves or American or Baltic wood, I do not think there would be any inducement for New Zealand colonists to undertake the supply upon a contract extending only to the usual term of one year. I would therefore ask whether the term of contract can be extended, and, if so, for how long. In the meantime I am forwarding the correspondence to New Zealand, with the view of inviting practical suggestions in the colony from persons interested in the salting industry.

My Government will entirely appreciate the spirit in which my Lords are seeking to open up a

\* Not enclosed.