

fresh source of supply for the navy from New Zealand; and it encourages me to bring before you another matter, to which I would ask their favourable consideration. On more than one occasion questions have been asked in the New Zealand Legislature whether it would not be possible for the Imperial authorities to give such notice of supplies being required of tinned meats as would enable people engaged in that industry in the colony to send in tenders; and it was suggested that such a notice should be telegraphed, sufficient time being allowed to colonial tenderers for delivering the tins in this country. The advantage, which my Lords recognize, of obtaining, as far as possible, the food-supplies for Her Majesty's forces (other things being equal) from the Queen's possessions, is especially clear in the case of tinned meats, a practically unlimited supply of which, both beef and mutton, is at the command of the Imperial services in New Zealand and Australia. The objection may perhaps be admitted to be not without force, that, full publicity being always given here to all requirements for tinned meats, it is the business of persons engaged in that particular industry to have competent agents in this country able to tender for the supply. But the colonists themselves who are in the industry do not know what the average quantity annually wanted really is, nor the countries whose ordinary competition they have to meet, nor the average price that is paid over a given time.

I venture to ask whether these particulars could be given to me, with the view of ascertaining how far New Zealand would be prepared to supply the goods, and to undertake on a larger scale than at present the expenditure necessary for a constantly regular production within a margin of that average price. An essential element, as in the case of salt beef, would be the term of contract, and my Lords may be willing to extend the present ordinary term if other conditions were performed to their satisfaction. I shall be much obliged by any other details regarding the ordinary supply of tinned meats, which my Lords may think would enable my Government to give the best information to the Legislature of the colony.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary to the Admiralty, Whitehall.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure 3 in No. 4.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the UNDER-SECRETARY of STATE for WAR.

SIR,—

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

I beg permission to bring before the Secretary of State a matter to which I would ask his favourable consideration.

On more than one occasion questions have been asked in the New Zealand Legislature whether it would not be possible for the War Office to give greater opportunities that at present exist for the supply of tinned meats and frozen mutton to Her Majesty's forces.

As regards tinned meats, it has been suggested that notice of the Imperial requirements should be telegraphed, sufficient time being allowed for colonial tenderers to deliver the supplies in this country. As regards frozen mutton, it is assumed that the War Office would not object to contractors being allowed to tender for the supply of that article when tenders are invited for the supplies of fresh meat.

I am aware that it may be objected that, as full publicity is always given here to all requirements for the Imperial service, it is the business of colonists who may be engaged in the particular industries thereby affected to have competent agents in this country able to tender for the supplies required. But the colonists occupied in the two industries to which I am referring do not know what the average quantities annually wanted really are, nor the countries whose ordinary competition they have to meet, nor the average prices that are paid over a given period, nor even (as to frozen mutton) how far consumption by the army would be permitted. I am very sensible that the Secretary of State would look favourably upon the proposition that it is desirable to obtain, as far as possible (other things being equal), the food-supplies for the army from within the Queen's possessions. As regards both tinned meats and frozen mutton, practically unlimited quantities are available in New Zealand; and I venture to ask that information on the points mentioned above should be given to me, in order to enable my Government to communicate the same to the Colonial Parliament.

I have, &c.,

The Under-Secretary of State for War.

F. D. BELL.

No. 5.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 8th March, 1887.

In continuation of my letter of the 11th February, No. 207, I beg to enclose copy of one I have received from the War Office relating to the supply of tinned and frozen meats.

As regards tinned meat, you will observe that (except in times of emergency) the annual War Office requirements are only about 600,000lb., at a price under £2 10s. per cwt., and the contractors have to guarantee the meat to keep sound for two years. Everything depends upon the care with which the meat is canned; and I ought to mention that, only the other day, when New Zealand tinned meats were to be supplied for the emigrants in the steamship "Arawa," the tins had to be rejected. The War Office has requested me to send in samples of the best New Zealand brands, and I am making inquiries accordingly.

As regards frozen mutton, the War Office does not think it advisable to make specific contracts for its supply, on account of the prejudice still existing against its use; but it is nevertheless certain that large quantities of the mutton are actually supplied by fresh-meat contractors as part of their