

1887.

NEW ZEALAND.

## CONFERENCE OF COLONIAL REPRESENTATIVES IN LONDON.

(CORRESPONDENCE RELATING THERETO.)

*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., 7th December, 1886.

I transmit to you herewith copies, received from the Colonial Office, of a circular despatch addressed by the Secretary of State to the Governors of colonies under Responsible Government, announcing that Her Majesty's Government have advised the Queen to summon a Conference to meet in London in the early part of next year, at which representatives of the Governments are to be invited to attend for the discussion of such questions as may appear to demand attention at the time.

You will have heard long ago of the proposed Conference through Press telegrams, and if your Government intends that it should be attended by any one on behalf of New Zealand I presume that I shall hear in due course. I am very doubtful at present whether it would not be going beyond my province to offer any opinion of my own respecting the Conference.

I have, &amp;c.,

F. D. BELL.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

## Enclosure.

SIR,—

Downing Street, 25th November, 1886.

You will, no doubt, have remarked that in the Queen's Speech on the prorogation of Parliament Her Majesty was pleased to refer to her colonial and Indian possessions in the following terms: "I have observed with much satisfaction the interest which, in an increasing degree, is evinced by the people of this country in the welfare of their colonial and Indian fellow-subjects; and I am led to the conviction that there is on all sides a growing desire to draw closer in every practicable way the bonds which unite the various portions of the Empire. I have authorized communications to be entered into with the principal colonial Governments with a view to the fuller consideration of matters of common interest."

2. The communications thus promised with the colonies have engaged the careful consideration of Her Majesty's Government, and they have come to the conclusion that the Queen should be advised to summon a Conference, to meet in London in the early part of next year, at which representatives of the principal colonial Governments will be invited to attend for the discussion of those questions which appear more particularly to demand attention at the present time. I request you to inform your Ministers of this proposal, which I am confident will be very satisfactory to them, and to express the hope which I entertain of their cordial co-operation.

3. In the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, the question which is at once urgent and capable of useful consideration at the present time is that of organization of military defence. The patriotic action of the colonies in offering contingents of troops to take part in the Egyptian campaign made a deep and lasting impression on the public mind, and was the first practical result of much careful work during recent years. It is a necessity of the case that the measures which have been taken in each colony, as well for the organization of the local forces as for the construction of local defensive works, are to a great extent not yet fully understood and appreciated in other parts of the Empire. The close and thorough examination of the whole subject of Imperial defence which was completed by the Royal Commission presided over by the Earl of Carnarvon has led to the execution of extensive and important defensive works in various parts of the Empire; and the cordial co-operation offered to Her Majesty's Government by the colonies in carrying out this policy indicates their desire to arrive, so far as may at present be practicable, at a common basis

of action. This work is still being actively pressed on with the assistance of a Standing Committee, which is continuously occupied with matters relating to colonial defence.

4. Much yet remains to be done ; and it is, of course, unavoidable that secrecy should continue to be observed with regard to many of the defensive measures in progress or in contemplation. The time has, however, now arrived when an attempt may fairly be made to attain to a better understanding as to the system of defence which may be established throughout the Empire. For this purpose an interchange of knowledge as to the state of preparation or as to the capabilities of organization in each colony would lead to a more thorough understanding of their wants and wishes ; but, whilst Her Majesty's Government would thus be prepared to recommend for the consideration of the Conference certain principles calculated to promote the general defence of the Empire, it is not our intention in calling the Conference to commit either the Imperial Government or any colony to new projects entailing heavy expenditure, but rather to secure that the sums which may be devoted to this purpose may be utilized to the fullest extent, with complete knowledge of all the conditions of the problem.

5. Second only in importance to this great question is one concerning in a special degree the interests of the Empire in time of peace. The promotion of commercial and social relations by the development of our postal and telegraphic communications could be considered with much advantage by the proposed Conference. It is a subject the conditions of which are constantly changing. New requirements come into existence, and new projects are formulated, every year. It is obviously desirable that the question of Imperial intercommunication should be considered as a whole, in order that the needs of every part of the Empire may, as far as practicable, be provided for, and that suggestions may be obtained from all quarters as to the best means of establishing a complete system of communications without that increased expenditure which necessarily results from isolated action.

6. Two leading subjects for consideration have been referred to, but it is not impossible that there may be some other important question which in the general opinion of the colonial Governments might properly and usefully be brought under consideration. But I should deprecate the discussion at the present time of any of the subjects falling within the range of what is known as political federation. There has been no expression of colonial opinion in favour of any steps in that direction ; and Her Majesty's Government are of opinion that there would be no advantage in the informal discussion of a very difficult problem before any basis has been accepted by the Governments concerned. It might, indeed, be detrimental to the ultimate attainment of a more developed system of united action if a question not yet ripe for practical decision were now to be brought to the test of a formal examination.

7. The Conference will necessarily be purely consultative, and it will therefore not be material that the colonies should have equal or proportional representation upon it. The desire of Her Majesty's Government would rather be that its constitution should be sufficiently comprehensive to include, in addition to the Agent-General or other specially-deputed representative of each Government, any leading public man who may be at liberty to come to England next year, and may be specially qualified to take a useful part in the deliberations. It will, I think, be convenient that I should preside at the Conference, and I need not say that I anticipate much advantage to myself and to Her Majesty's Government from the opportunities of acquiring information which will thus be afforded to me.

8. I will only add, in conclusion, that I am confident that your Government will, as I do, feel deep interest in this first attempt to bring all parts of Her Majesty's Empire into joint deliberation. However modest the commencement may be, results may grow out of it affecting, in a degree which it is at present difficult to appreciate, the interests of the Empire and of the civilized world.

I have, &c.,

EDWARD STANHOPE.

To the Governors of colonies under Responsible Government.

P.S.—My own opinion is that the best time for meeting would be the month of April or May, but I should be glad in this matter to be guided by the general opinion of the Colonial Governments.

## No. 2.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 24th December, 1886.

In continuation of my letter of the 7th instant, No. 1,706, it may be convenient for purposes of record that I should send you a copy of the telegram from the Secretary of State to the Governors of colonies under Responsible Government, and of Natal and Western Australia, to acquaint them with his proposal for the Conference next year.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

## Enclosure.

CONFIDENTIAL TELEGRAM from the Right Hon. EDWARD STANHOPE, M.P., to the GOVERNORS of COLONIES UNDER RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT, NATAL, and WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

2ND DECEMBER, 1886.—Referring to Queen's Speech proroguing Parliament, Her Majesty's Government propose Conference in London early next year with colonial representatives to discuss defence, postal, telegraphic communications, and, perhaps, other important questions ; but not political federation, which question not yet ripe. Conference consultative only, so number re pre-

representatives each colony not material. Suggested include, in addition to Agent-General or other specially-deputed representative, any leading public man with special qualifications who may be here. Secretary of State for Colonies to preside. Probably April or May. Despatch sent 25th November explaining fully.

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### No. 3.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

CONFERENCE: You have been appointed represent us. Date prevents Minister attending.  
13th January, 1887.

ROBERT STOUT.

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### No. 4.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,— 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 28th January, 1887.

I have just received a note from Sir Robert Herbert, of which a copy is annexed, stating that, for reasons therein mentioned, the Secretary of State has now altered the date again for the meeting of the Conference to the 5th of April.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

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### Enclosure.

MY DEAR SIR FRANCIS,—

Colonial Office, Downing Street, 28th January, 1887.

I am desired by Sir Henry Holland to acquaint you that, as he has been informed by telegraph that the gentlemen appointed to represent New South Wales at the Colonial Conference cannot possibly arrive in England before the 1st April, and as the representatives of Victoria will also be unable to reach England until some days after the 22nd March, he feels that there is no alternative but to postpone the opening of the Conference; and, as at present advised, he thinks that Monday, the 4th, or Tuesday, the 5th April, will be the day on which it can most conveniently assemble.

Yours very truly,

ROBT. G. W. HERBERT.

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### No. 5.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

CONFERENCE: Sir W. Fitzherbert has been appointed act with you. Commission, 'Frisco.  
21st February, 1887.

ROBERT STOUT.

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### No. 6.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

CONFERENCE: Pleasure co-operate Fitzherbert.  
21st February, 1887.

F. D. BELL.

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### No. 7.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,— 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 22nd February, 1887.

I had the honour to receive yesterday your telegram informing me that Sir William Fitzherbert had been appointed to act with me at the approaching Conference, and I replied that I should co-operate with him with great pleasure. It is no slight relief to me to know that I shall not be alone in the endeavour to represent the interests of New Zealand at the Conference, and I am sure that Sir William and I shall be able to work together in perfect concert.

In contemplation of the difficult task I should have had if alone, I had been preparing a letter to you with my own view on the present position of several subjects sure to come before the Conference, with the object of receiving instructions in time for my guidance. I now think it will be more fair to Sir William that I should wait until we can consult together before expressing ideas which he may perhaps not share, especially as he will bring the latest results of his own communications with you, and throw a new light upon many things which have been occupying the thoughts of us all for so long.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

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### No. 8.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,— 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 11th March, 1887.

A question was asked in the House of Commons last night on the subject of the Conference to meet next month, and I beg to enclose the *Times* report of Sir Henry Holland's reply. Although you will see that Sir Henry only mentions as matters to be discussed those indicated by Mr. Stanhope, it is not thought that they will be the only subjects brought before the Conference, and the question as to what should be the procedure in such cases has for some time been under careful consideration by the Secretary of State, being one of some difficulty and complication.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

## Enclosure.

[Extracts from the *Times*, Friday, 11th March, 1887.]

## THE COLONIAL CONFERENCE.

MR. O. V. MORGAN asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies how many colonial Governments would be represented at the Conference summoned by the Government to meet in London in April; whether any distinction had been made between self-governing and Crown colonies; who would be the representatives of the Imperial Government at the Conference; where the Conference would take place, and how long it was expected to continue; and whether the House could be told what were the subjects to be put forward for discussion.

Sir H. HOLLAND.—All the colonies under Responsible Government—*i.e.*, Canada, the Australasian Colonies, the Cape, Newfoundland, and also the Colony of Natal—will be represented. About twenty-four or twenty-five representatives are expected. The Crown colonies will not be specially represented unless in any case a question should arise in reference to which any person from the colony happening to be in England could give useful information. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, or, in his absence, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, will preside at its sittings. Other members of Her Majesty's Government or departmental officers will attend if the subject under discussion renders their attendance desirable. The sittings of the Conference will be held at the Colonial Office. Most of the colonial representatives must return at an early date for the sessions of their Parliaments, so that the Conference cannot continue for more than a very few weeks. The subjects proposed for consideration in Mr. Stanhope's despatch inviting the Conference are (1) defence, (2) postal and telegraphic communications, (3) any other important question which in the general opinion of the colonial Governments may properly and usefully be brought under consideration. Political federation is expressly excluded from discussion at the Conference.

## THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE.

THE forthcoming Imperial Conference, respecting which Sir Henry Holland gave some information in the House of Commons yesterday, is to begin its sittings on the 4th April, by which date it is expected that all its members will be in England. It will be seen from the list given below that the colonies have heartily responded to the invitation of the Government by sending some of the most prominent colonial statesmen to take part in this the first meeting of the Empire in Council. The members of the Imperial Federation League, at whose suggestion the Conference has been summoned, will entertain the representatives appointed by the colonies to attend it at a banquet on Saturday, 2nd April, at the Freemasons' Tavern. The Earl of Rosebery will preside, and a distinguished list of stewards, composed of men of all parties, has been issued. It is probable that there will be a very large attendance. The Duke of Cambridge has signified his intention to be present.

The representatives of the various colonies, so far as settled, will be as follows:—New South Wales: Sir Patrick Jennings (late Premier), Sir Saul Samuel (Agent-General), and the Hon. Robert Wisdom. Queensland: Sir Samuel Griffith, K.C.M.G. (Premier), and Sir James Garrick. South Australia: The Hon. J. W. Downer (Premier), Sir Arthur Blyth (Agent-General), and the Hon. Adye Douglas. Tasmania: The Hon. John Stockell Dodds (Attorney-General). Victoria: Sir Graham Berry (Agent-General), the Hon. Alfred Deakin (Chief Secretary), the Hon. James Lorrimer (Minister of Colonial Defence), and the Hon. James Service. Western Australia: The Hon. John Forrest (Commissioner of Crown Lands). New Zealand: Sir Francis Dillon Bell (Agent-General), Sir W. Fitzherbert (Speaker Legislative Council), and the Hon. Robert Stout (Premier). Newfoundland: The Hon. Mr. Thorburn (Premier), and Sir Ambrose Shea. Cape Colony: The Hon. T. Upington, the Hon. John Hofmeyer, and Sir Charles Mills (Agent-General). Natal: Sir W. C. Sargeaunt and Mr. Robinson. The representatives from Canada have not yet been appointed.

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