

## No. 2.

(No. 19.)

SIR,—

Government House, Auckland, 26th May, 1896.

I yesterday had the honour of receiving your telegram inquiring when you might expect to hear from me relative to the protest made on the advice of my Government, by cable, as to the proposed administration of Norfolk Island by New South Wales.

My Government having delayed to follow up their advice by any further communication, pending developments regarding the proposed new Pacific cable, I telegraphed to inform them of the receipt of your cable message, and I now have the honour to give you the purport of their reply.

In amplification of and addition to their previous representations, my Government raise the following objections to the control of Norfolk Island by New South Wales.

In the event of a new Pacific cable being laid on British territory alone, in all probability Norfolk Island would be selected as the station from which a branch cable would be laid to New Zealand.

Under such circumstances, and without desiring in any way to adopt an unfriendly attitude towards a neighbouring colony, with whom New Zealand has always been on the most friendly terms, my Government have the strongest objection to the junction of the New Zealand branch with the main cable being on territory controlled by any other colony, even if that colony be New South Wales.

I am further advised to bring to your notice the agreement which was originally made with the islanders—that, while their island was and would remain an integral part of the Empire, they should enjoy local self-government without interference; also that, as far as my Advisers have been able to ascertain, there has not been sufficient ground for the contemplated abrogation of the rights and privileges of the islanders.

Should, however, the Imperial authorities decide that the time has arrived for placing Norfolk Island under more direct control, it is the opinion of my Government that the claims of this colony to administer Norfolk Island are superior to those of New South Wales. It is true that New South Wales has exercised a sort of suzerainty or superiority over Norfolk Island, but that arose from the fact that New South Wales was the centre and head-quarters of British authority in Australasia in the days when Norfolk Island was first settled; but it does not give that colony any claim to continue the present shadowy control, and to convert it into a more effective one, if a better arrangement in the interests of the island can be effected.

If any change has to be made it appears to my Government that other circumstances have to be taken into consideration. Norfolk Island is three hundred miles nearer New Zealand than New South Wales; it is part of the diocese of Melanesia, which is, ecclesiastically speaking, a part of the Province of New Zealand. Thus there is a considerable amount of sympathy and community of feeling between Norfolk Island and this colony, which subscribes liberally to the cost of the Melanesian Mission, and for this and other reasons I am informed that the Bishop of Melanesia, as well as the other bishops in New Zealand, demur to the island passing under the Government of New South Wales.

Finally, I am advised that, as far as my Ministers can ascertain, if any change is to take place in the government of Norfolk Island, the islanders, while protesting against any change, would prefer to come under the control of New Zealand rather than that of New South Wales. Should the claim of New Zealand be given effect to, the proper arrangements for the administration of the island, similar to those in the Cook Islands, would at once be made.

My Government therefore beg to suggest that, pending the settlement of the question of laying a new Pacific cable, at any rate, no change should be made in respect to the control of Norfolk Island.

I have, &amp;c.,

The Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain,

GLASGOW.

Secretary of State for the Colonies.