

change that—even after full allowance is made for the larger population which would profit by it—the question as to gain or loss, as affecting the colony as a whole, will be found, when put into figures, to bring out an answer greatly in favour of Auckland as the port of call, in the proportion, indeed, of quite two to one. The figures on which this calculation is based are these: Auckland Province—population 159,216, loss 48 hours; Taranaki—population 32,271, loss 20 hours; Hawke's Bay—population 35,561, loss 4 hours; as against a gain of 8 hours to a population in the South of 501,958, according to last census. It is true that the mail is not exactly distributed in the ratio of the population, but any difference in that respect could not greatly alter the result as now stated.

*Cargo.*—Auckland, including Gisborne and Napier shipments, receives three-fifths of the inward cargo, and contributes more than two-thirds of what goes outward. The figures in tons are as follows, for the period from the 19th March, 1898, to the 17th April, 1899:—

	Auckland.	Gisborne and Napier.	Wellington.	South.	Total.
Inwards ...	2,405 tons	238 tons	658 tons	1,138 tons	4,439 tons
Outwards ...	1,339 "	...	275 "	260 "	1,874 "

With Wellington as the port of call, the Auckland portion of the inward cargo (2,405 tons), more than half of the whole landed, would reach consignees at least eighty hours later than at present—*i.e.*, twenty hours on ocean passage to Wellington, and sixty hours thence, coastwise, to Auckland, *via* East Coast. On the other hand, Wellington and southern ports would gain forty hours, as, against the loss of twenty hours on the longer passage from Samoa, they would profit by the sixty hours now taken in the coastwise passage from Auckland—say, forty hours on 1,796 tons.

In respect to outward cargo, the position is somewhat different, provided we leave out of view the longer steaming-time from Wellington to Samoa. In that case, Auckland may be considered to lose only the time coastwise—say, sixty hours on 1,339 tons; while Wellington and the southern ports would gain as on inward cargo forty hours, say, on 535 tons.\* Still, dealing with the matter of New Zealand cargo only, and taking the inward and outward either separately or conjointly, when quantity and time are taken into account, the sum figures, as with the mails, again two to one in favour of the present port of call.

After all, the New Zealand cargo forms but a relatively small portion of the freight carried. The tonnage to and from New South Wales much exceeds that of the New Zealand shipments. Inward cargo to Sydney is, indeed, six times as great as the tonnage for the whole of New Zealand—say, 1,200 tons to 200 tons. Outward cargo is much in the same proportion as that in our colony, except in the wool season, when Australian shipments are much larger, as many as 2,000 bales going at times in one steamer.

*Passengers.*—In respect also of passengers, Sydney has a much larger interest than New Zealand, the number going to and from that port being nearly twice as great as that of New Zealand passengers. The numbers for the period from 19th March, 1898, to 17th April, 1899, were:—

	New Zealand.	Sydney.
Inward ...	278	549
Outward ...	396	755

*Sydney.*—To put matters shortly: If Wellington were to be made the port of call, Sydney would have its mails delayed seventeen hours or thereabouts; delivery of its important inward cargo—six times as large as that of all New Zealand put together—would simply be delayed, and passengers would have their voyage prolonged,—and all this unnecessarily.

*New Zealand.*—As regards New Zealand, Wellington and the South Island would have their mails delivered eight hours earlier, and cargo forty hours earlier than at present. But the loss caused to the North would be so much greater, as already shown, as to much more than counter-balance this gain.

To recapitulate, the loss of time to Auckland Province in mail-delivery would be six times greater than the southern gain, and, taking into account the difference in population, would be still twice as great relatively. Auckland cargo (3,744 tons) would lose *en route* to or from Wellington, in effect, eighty hours, as against the gain to the South of forty hours on 2,569 tons. In short, Auckland, by its position, is the natural port of arrival and departure for traffic coming from the north, and it would require a very strong case indeed to warrant the diverting of the San Francisco mail-service from it to a port further south.

We venture to say that the figures herein stated make out a valid claim, on the contrary, for the continuation of that service *via* Auckland. It is, of course, regrettable that any part of the colony should be at any disadvantage, even if not considerable, through Auckland being the port of call, and in so far as regards delivery of the mail it is to be hoped that it may be possible to expedite it. Indeed, were it not for the isolation of the Auckland Province, in so far as railway communication with the South is concerned, there would not now have been cause of complaint on this score. In conclusion, it may also be noted that the extra run of thirty-four hours per voyage would add a considerable item to the cost of the steamer service—a cost of which, presumably, the colony would have to bear its share, on account of the contractors asking an increased subsidy.

JOHN BURNS, President.

H. GOULSTONE, Secretary.

\* P.S.—This month (May) outward shipments from the South, chiefly flax, are in excess of those from Auckland.

### No. 3.

The Hon. SECRETARY, Chamber of Commerce, Gisborne, to the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Wellington.

SIR,—

Gisborne Chamber of Commerce, Gisborne, 12th June, 1899.

I am instructed by the above Chamber to forward you resolution passed at a meeting held on the 9th instant, in reference to the port of call for the San Francisco mail-service. . . .