

## No. 79.

The SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington, to the GENERAL MANAGER, Union Steam Ship Company, Dunedin.

SIR,—

General Post Office, Wellington, 9th July, 1908.

I have the honour, by direction of the Postmaster-General, to inquire whether your company is willing to renew the Wellington-Sydney mail-service at the present subsidy.

I am to point out that the recent failures to connect with the mail-train at Sydney, owing to the late departure of steamers from Wellington, render it necessary that the new agreement should contain a penalty clause to cover failures due to the steamer being delayed at Wellington until too late an hour to make the connection. The Postmaster-General considers that such penalty should be either the payment of the cost of a special train from Sydney to Melbourne—about £230—or the deduction of a moiety of the subsidy.

I have, &c.,

D. ROBERTSON, Secretary.

The General Manager, Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand (Limited), Dunedin.

[Suez Conn. 08/35.]

## No. 80.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 15th July, 1908.

MR. AITKEN to ask the Postmaster-General, Whether he noticed that the southern portion of the British mail (inward) missed the connection at Auckland this week by one hour, and if he will take steps so as to prevent this happening in future? [NOTE.—This is particularly aggravating to business people in Wellington this week, as, had the connection been made in Auckland, answers could have been made to correspondence by the Vancouver mail.]

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—The mails *ex* the Orient steamer generally arrive at Sydney only a short time before the departure of the steamer for Auckland. It does not, therefore, appear to be practicable to insure an earlier arrival at Auckland by starting the steamer from Sydney earlier. As regards this particular case the s.s. "Moana" arrived in Auckland Harbour at 4 p.m. on Sunday the 5th instant, and the s.s. "Ngapuhi" left Onehunga at 3.45 p.m. The manager of the Northern Steamship Company was asked whether he would hold the steamer for the southern portion of the English mails, but he declined, owing to the fact that the weather was far too dirty to permit of the steamer being kept with safety. Had the "Ngapuhi" been detained she could not have left Onehunga before 7 p.m.; and the weather was so bad that it was thought very unlikely she would be able to get out before daylight. The Northern Steamship Company has always been very obliging in holding their steamer for the English mails, but in this particular case it was altogether out of the question to expect them to run the risk of disorganizing their service, and causing serious inconvenience to passengers, on the remote chance of the steamer getting out at 7 p.m.

[Mails ceased to be carried coastwise by sea. February, 1909. Main Trunk Railway utilised regularly for mails, 14th February, 1909.]

[Suez Conn. 08/46.]

## No. 81.

The GENERAL MANAGER, Union Steam Ship Company (at Wellington), to the SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington.

Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand (Limited),

Wellington, 24th July, 1908.

SIR,—

Adverting to your letter of the 9th instant, with regard to the Wellington-Sydney mail-service:

I have to state that on behalf of the Union Company and Messrs. Huddart, Parker, and Co., we are willing to renew the contract.

In reference to the suggestion that a penalty should be incurred if steamers fail to connect with the express from Sydney on Tuesday nights, I would point out that the present allowance of £15,000 per annum was accepted last year on the express provision that there should be no penalties. Since the contract was entered into, the connection was missed (a) on the occasion of the "Monowai" breakdown at sea; (b) on the "Ulimaroa," failure in June owing to bad weather; (c) the "Maheno" also missing the mail a week later, also on account of bad weather.

It is worthy of note that the two newest ships in the service were responsible for two out of the three failures, and, although, on account of the cargo commitments, they were not able to leave Wellington as early as we should have liked, the bad weather encountered was the determining factor in their late arrivals.

With the exceptions mentioned, the steamers have all arrived to time, but have involved both companies in a heavy expenditure to do so.

These points we fully referred to when negotiating the previous contract, and I would only wish to say that all the possible drawbacks to which attention was then drawn have occurred during the experience of the last twelve months, and the service is a much more arduous one than it appears to be.

Under these circumstances it seems to me reasonable that, if penalties are to be imposed, it would not be out of place to ask for a slightly increased subsidy. The present payment works out at £288 per trip, and I would suggest for your consideration that an additional £12 per trip would not be unreasonable.