

# INTERPROVINCIAL SERVICE.

## No. 120.

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

SIR,—

General Post Office, Wellington, 30th September, 1908.

I have the honour to inform you that it is learnt from the Railway Department that when the railway through service from Invercargill to Auckland is inaugurated, the express will leave Invercargill approximately at 7 a.m., and that the train cannot be delayed for mails for more than ten minutes, whenever this may be deemed necessary. This means that the latest time at which a special train can be despatched from Bluff to connect with the express will be 6.25 o'clock. To insure certain connection, therefore, the steamers with mails from Melbourne and Hobart will require to reach the Bluff wharf by 5 a.m., or even earlier. It is unnecessary for me to emphasize the particular importance of the connection under notice being made, not only for mail purposes, but for intending passengers on the North Island railways when the Main Trunk line is opened, as this is very apparent. May I therefore ask that your company will favourably consider the matter of an earlier departure of your steamers from Melbourne and Hobart, to allow of their reaching Bluff not later than 5 a.m., assuming that it is not practicable, under the existing time-table from Melbourne, to accelerate the running? As the matter is a pressing one, I shall be glad to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

I am informed that, provided the state of the weather and of the tide permits, steamers may enter the Bluff harbour at night, as for some time past a system of electric lighting has been in operation which enables steamers to berth at the wharf at any time. I have, &c.,

D. ROBERTSON, Secretary.

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

[P.O. 08/4050.]

## No. 121.

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

Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand (Limited),

SIR,—

Dunedin, 10th October, 1908.

I have to acknowledge receipt of your favour of the 30th ultimo, advising that, in view of the early inauguration of a through service from Invercargill to Auckland, it is desirable that the inward steamer from Melbourne should arrive at Bluff wharf on Monday at 5 a.m., or earlier, so as to permit of a special train connecting with the 7 a.m. express from Invercargill.

To do this it would be necessary for the steamer to leave Hobart early on the previous Friday, and then the voyage could only be made in the time if the weather were favourable and the state of the tide at Bluff on the steamer's arrival were suitable, for—as perhaps you are aware—Bluff harbour can only be entered at slack water—i.e., twice in every twelve hours; thus, if high water at Bluff were at 8 a.m., the steamer would need to be there six hours earlier, or 2 a.m.

To reach the Bluff at 5 a.m. a steamer leaving Hobart as early as 1 p.m.—nearly three days previous—would require to steam almost fifteen knots, apart from the time lost in getting away from the berth in Hobart and berthing at Bluff; and, while in good weather some of our steamers do this, it cannot be relied on with any certainty. During the last year in order to reach Bluff on Mondays early enough to leave the same day for Dunedin, which is necessary to maintain the Friday sailing from Wellington, we have despatched vessels at an early hour from both Melbourne and Hobart. A number of the ships have been advertised to sail at 10 a.m. on Wednesdays from Melbourne, and from Hobart at 10 a.m., and as late as noon on Fridays; but this has caused serious inconvenience and heavy expense in working these ports on account of the excessive overtime incurred, and also great inconvenience to shippers—particularly of fruit and other perishable cargo. The chief objection, however, is that a morning departure from Melbourne and Hobart is exceedingly unwelcome to passengers; and there are evidences that these sailing-hours are affecting the popularity of the route, as shown by the fact that tourists who previously made Bluff the first port of call and worked the southern lakes before going to the North Island, now frequently proceed from Melbourne to Sydney, and sail thence for Auckland or Wellington, and often omit the South Island altogether. This is disadvantageous to the Dominion, though it does not affect the company's earnings seriously. The unpopularity of early sailings, and one which might not at first occur to you, is that a number of passengers from Melbourne do not reside in that city, but are gathered from country districts and neighbouring States. The expresses from Adelaide and inland points in Victoria do not arrive in Melbourne till about midday, and passengers are therefore unable to proceed straight on board their steamer, but require to spend a day and night in Melbourne before embarking. The voyage—Melbourne to Hobart—by our steamers averages about thirty-six hours, so that the vessels arrive at the latter port about 10 p.m., and, as considerable cargo