

# NEW ZEALAND.

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

### REPORT OF THE STEAM NAVIGATION COMMITTEE.

ORDERED TO BE PRINTED JULY 21st, 1854.

The Select Committee of the House of Representatives, appointed on the 16th ultimo, to report as to the best means of establishing Steam Communication between the different Provinces of New Zealand, have given to the subject their best attention, and, having taken such very limited evidence as is procurable here, have agreed to the following report.

Your Committee find that the subject of intercolonial Steam Navigation has occupied public attention in this colony, in England, and Australia, for some considerable time past;—and even while its members are still sitting, reports are current of large and powerful steam vessels being advertised to visit New Zealand during the present month.

Your committee, have not, however, considered this probability sufficient to induce them to stop sending in their report, or in arresting the progress of their enquiry.

Previous to the meeting of the General Assembly, several public meetings had been held in the Southern Provinces, and committees appointed to get information on the subject of inter-colonial Steam Communication, and in the several Provincial Councils, considerable sums were voted towards this object.

While the subject was thus exciting public attention in New Zealand, it appears that persons in England, interested in the welfare of the colony, had been making arrangements to send a screw-propelled steam vessel to it, and within these few months, a new useful iron-constructed vessel of that description, 285 tons register, including engine room, and of 50 horse power, with extensive and comfortable accommodation for passengers, arrived at Nelson,—and since by arrangements made between the agents of the vessel and the Superintendent of Nelson, "The Nelson" has been engaged for twelve months from the 1st of May last, to keep up the communication between the different Provinces as frequently as practicable, for which service, a sum of £6000 is so be paid—a copy of which agreement is hereunto annexed.

Of the advantages of this undertaking, your committee cannot too strongly record their unanimous opinion, and whilst desirous of avoiding the political part of the question to which their attention has not been directed by the house, they cannot avoid stating that in the existing circumstances of this Colony, the establishment of efficient and rapid Steam Communication between the different Provinces, is absolutely required for the proper conduct of the General and Provincial Legislatures—now that the principle of responsibility has been admitted, nothing is more necessary than that the least possible delay and uncertainty should exist in the transmission of government despatches and documents between the general and executive officers, and the local authorities in the different Provinces, and between the different members of the two branches of the Legislature—and further that the facilities of intercourse should be so arranged that the most distant of them should be brought within communication of one another, at least once a month.

The effect also of rapid and regular communication, has always a tendency to an equalization of prices, which is of course beneficial to the consumers, and, consequently, to the colony generally.

Your Committee is here desirous of drawing attention to the following return furnished by the Postmaster, showing the number of letters and newspapers received at the post-office in Auckland, on each separate voyage of "the Nelson" steamer from the Southern Provinces.

First Voyage.		Second Voyage.		Third Voyage.	
Number of Letters.	Number of newspapers.	Number of Letters.	Number of newspapers.	Number of Letters.	Number of newspapers.
79	54	835	938	625	1166

A return showing the number of letters and newspapers forwarded by the post-office in Auckland to the Southern Settlements or Provinces on each separate voyage of the same steamer.

First Voyage.		Second Voyage.		Third Voyage.	
Number of Letters.	Number of newspapers.	Number of Letters.	Number of newspapers.	Number of Letters.	Number of newspapers.
124	65	242	1063	2406	3852