

I think it due to you that I should state that the Prime Minister's censure, so far as the fact is concerned, of there having been any unofficial correspondence, can only apply to myself and not to you. I think Mr. Stout must have intended to refer to the six semi-official letters which I wrote to you, between the 22nd December and 14th February last, upon several matters connected with the steam service and immigration.

Those letters were not written in consequence of any instructions from you, and certainly not with any idea that it would even be agreeable for you to receive them. The reason for their being written was simply this: the generosity with which, allowing as you did for the many difficulties against which I had to contend, you had left the arrangements relating to immigration to me, was appreciated by me all the more because I doubted very much whether the line I was taking was the one which, had you chosen to send me express instructions, you would have laid down yourself. Under these circumstances it seemed to me that it was your clear right to know all that was taking place, although much of it was necessarily of a kind which could not possibly be stated in public despatches, and I therefore sent you the particulars I did in those letters, not with any idea that your views would be the same as mine, and certainly not with any wish to defend the course I was taking, but simply because I thought it was your right to know everything that I was doing. Whatever blame may properly attach to my having written those letters is blame which belongs to me alone, and which I feel bound to do all I can to take entirely to myself as soon as it seems to be in any way imputed to me.

I need hardly say that you are at perfect liberty to make any use you think proper of this letter. I am sending a copy of it to the Prime Minister.

Hon. W. Rolleston, &c.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

No. 13.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 3rd January, 1885.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 500, of the 31st October last.

2. It is, I think, rather unusual for an Agent-General to interfere respecting debates in Parliament in which his conduct is not reviewed. The charge I made was against the late Minister for Immigration, and I think that he should have been able to give any required explanation.

3. You are under a misapprehension in assuming that any blame was cast upon you. What I protested against was that orders or directions were, as I was informed, given by the Minister for Immigration to the Agent-General, of which no record was kept in the Immigration Department. I admit, to the fullest extent, that confidential correspondence must pass between Ministers and the Agent-General, but where such correspondence relates to Government business a proper record of it should be left in the department for the use of future Ministers.

Sir F. D. Bell, K.C.M.G.,

Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT STOUT.