

SESS. II.—1887.
NEW ZEALAND.

PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF NEW HEBRIDES BY FRANCE.

(PAPERS RELATING THERETO.)

[In Continuation of A.-5, 1887, Session I.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

The CHIEF SECRETARY, Queensland, to the PREMIER, New Zealand.

SIR,—

Colonial Secretary's Office, Brisbane, 18th February, 1887.

I have the honour to forward to you the enclosed copy of a letter which has just been received from the Government Agent of the Queensland Pacific Island labour schooner "Helena" by the Assistant Immigration Agent at Bundaberg, with reference to the movements of the French authorities in the New Hebrides.

I have caused our Agent-General in London to be informed by cable of the statements contained in Mr. Cecil's report; and a copy of the report itself has been forwarded to Sir James Garrick, with the request that it may be laid before our Premier, who is now on his way to London, for such action as may be deemed necessary.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier of New Zealand, Wellington.

JAMES R. DICKSON.

Enclosure.

SIR,—

Labour Schooner "Helena," Bundaberg, 9th February, 1887.

During the voyage of the "Helena" the following intelligence was given to and facts ascertained by me relative to the movements of the French in the New Hebrides, which I trust you will communicate to the Chief Secretary. No. 1: When in Port Sandwich, on the 9th December, the French officers told me that they were about to erect forts for the protection of the port, one at the north head, one at the end of the harbour facing the entrance, and one near the company's store; also, that the number of soldiers was to be increased to 220, and that new barracks were to be built. No. 2: Whilst in Uraparapara, on the 8th January, the natives reported that a French war-ship had been there, and had pegged off land near the entrance to the harbour on both sides of the heads, on which, it was said, they intended to erect small batteries. No. 3: Whilst at Port Olroy, or Jackson Santo, the French despatch vessel "Guichen" came to the anchorage and landed a white missionary priest. I boarded her, and was told by the commander that they had within the three days previous landed three other priests—namely, two at Maté, in Villa Harbour, Sandwich, and one on private property at Proctor's Bay, which has been, or will be, bought by the Wesleyan missionary body.

I have, &c.,

The Assistant Immigration Agent, Bundaberg.

AUBREY C. CECIL.

No. 2.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 23rd February, 1887.

A Press telegram came from Queensland a few days ago, stating that the French were about to construct three forts in the New Hebrides, increase the number of their troops, build new barracks at Port Sandwich, and erect batteries at another place. Questions were asked on the subject in the House of Commons last night, when Sir James Fergusson, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said that the Government had had no confirmation of the report; but, on the contrary, had been informed that the French posts had been much reduced. He added that negotiations were still going on with the French Government "with a view to arrangements under which the troops would be altogether removed."