

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."

The *Temps* had an article discrediting the rumour, as its correspondent at Noumea had just written that only forty men remained at each of the posts, and the rest had been sent back to New Caledonia. The *Temps* says that the Queensland telegram was only meant to keep alive the old agitation about the Hebrides. The *Journal des Débats* also says it has no confirmation of the report.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure.

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 19th February, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Brisbane, 18th February.

THE labour schooner "Helena," which has arrived here from the New Hebrides, brings intelligence that the French are about to construct three forts, to increase the number of their troops, and to build new barracks at Port Sandwich. It is added that sites have also been selected for the erection of small batteries at the heads of Uraparapara.

[Extract from the *Times*, Wednesday, 23rd February, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

IN answer to Mr. G. O. Morgan, Commander Bethell, and Mr. Johnston, Sir J. FERGUSSON said: There has been no confirmation received by Her Majesty's Government of the statement that the French are about to construct new forts, to increase the number of their troops, and to build new barracks in the New Hebrides. On the contrary, Her Majesty's Government have been informed that the French posts have been much reduced. Her Majesty's Government are in correspondence with the French Government with a view to arrangements under which they will be removed altogether.

No. 3.

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

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 3rd March, 1887.

No. 1. I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 18th ultimo, forwarding copy of a letter from the Government Agent of the Queensland Pacific Islands labour schooner "Helena" with reference to the movements of the French authorities in the New Hebrides. I have to thank you for your attention, although I had already seen the substance of the Agent's letter published in the newspapers.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Queensland.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 4.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 10th March, 1887.

The French company interested in the acquisition of land made for some time past in the New Hebrides has just decided to send out a number of families to that group of islands. This is only another step in the policy which has long been steadily pursued in France, and which can only end, unless soon met by some reasonable arrangement, in her taking virtual if not formal possession of the group.

Lord Harrowby has given notice in the House of Lords to call attention to the state of affairs in the New Hebrides, and to ask what course is proposed to be taken by Her Majesty's Government.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

No. 5.

The MODERATOR, Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, to the PREMIER.

DEAR SIR,—

Remuera, Auckland, 12th March, 1887.

I have been requested by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand to write you, as Premier, *re* the threatened annexation of the New Hebrides by the French, and to again urge that the influence of the Government of the colony may be used to prevent any such attempt. We are exceedingly grateful for your courtesy and interest as manifested in your letter last year; but our missionaries are anxious that another and even stronger protest should be given against any encroachment by France upon the New Hebrides. The devoted and successful labours of Presbyterian missionaries in those islands during many years are well known, and anything like an annexation by France would, we fear, mean destruction—at least very great injury—to our missions. The missionaries do not seem to put much emphasis upon the assurances of France that protection would be given to Protestant missions, and believe that French annexation would mean the establishment of Romanism. Be this as it may, there are political reasons why France should not be permitted to annex the New Hebrides. If France owned those islands they would doubtless soon become convict settlements, and this would be a great calamity to the whole of the Australasian Colonies.

As a Church we have been earnestly watching the course of events, and feel encouraged by the favourable aspect of affairs at present; but it may be at such a juncture that a firm and decided protest by the New Zealand Government against any attempt to take possession of the New Hebrides would strengthen the position of the Home Government.

Thanking you for your former interest, and trusting you will again use your influence in this important matter,

I have, &c.,

G. B. MONRO,

Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

Sir R. Stout, Premier of New Zealand.

No. 6.

The PREMIER to the MODERATOR, Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 21st March, 1887.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th March, dealing with the New Hebrides question. I need not say that I exceedingly regret the position into which the New Hebrides question has drifted. I do not see any chance of the islands being annexed to Great Britain, and the solution I think possible now would be for the English Government to try and obtain those islands that have been the seat of the Protestant English mission, leaving to France the other islands.

The way in which British statesmen have during the past fifty years allowed the Pacific Islands question to drift shows that it is hopeless now to expect any vigorous action without provoking hostilities from European Powers.

I have, &c.,

The Rev. G. B. Monro, Moderator, Presbyterian Church
of New Zealand, Remuera, Auckland.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 7.

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

SIR,—

Colonial Secretary's Office, Brisbane, 25th July, 1887.

With reference to the letter addressed to you by the Acting Chief Secretary on the 18th of February last, in which was enclosed a copy of the report of Mr. Cecil, the Government Agent of the Queensland labour vessel "Helena," as to the movements of the French in the New Hebrides, I have the honour to inform you that I have just received the following cable message on the subject of Mr. Cecil's report from our Agent-General in London: "London, 20th July, 1887.—New Hebrides. Flourens told Lyons statements Cecil's letter must be inaccurate, and is inquiring into their truth."

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, New Zealand.

S. W. GRIFFITHS.

No. 8.

The PREMIER to the PREMIER, Queensland.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 23rd August, 1887.

I have the honour to acknowledge, with thanks, the receipt of your letter No. 5649, of the 25th July, forwarding copy of a telegram from the Queensland Agent-General in London on the subject of the New Hebrides.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier of Queensland, Brisbane.

P. A. BUCKLEY,
In absence of the Premier.

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