

1889.

## NEW ZEALAND.

# APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF RAILWAY COMMISSIONER

(CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING).

*Return to an Order of the House of Representatives dated 27th June, 1889.*

*Ordered, "That there be laid before this House copies of all correspondence between the Government and the Agent-General in England relative to the appointment of a Chief Railway Commissioner for New Zealand."—*  
(Mr. FITZHERBERT.)

MEMORANDUM.—Copy of all correspondence on the subject prior to that now furnished was laid upon the table of the House on the 31st May, 1888, in return to an order of the House dated the 25th May, 1888, made on the motion of Mr. Seddon.

H. J. H. BLOW,  
Assistant Under-Secretary for Public Works.

Public Works Office, Wellington, 11th July, 1889.

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## No. 1.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,— 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 30th April, 1888.

I have now received further applications for the Chief Commissionership of the Railway Board, four of which are from America, and I beg to enclose a list of them, as in the case of the other applications.

I am about to write to you saying that we cannot recommend any of the candidates at all. I am having the applications examined, so as to take out any originals or copies of testimonials which the candidates may want returned, and then I shall send you all the papers complete, in case you may wish to have them recorded in the Public Works Department.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

I have, &c.,  
F. D. BELL.

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## No. 2.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,— 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 4th May, 1888.

Since I wrote to you on the 21st April (No. 615) Sir Edward Watkin, Mr. Findlay, and myself have seen the candidates whose names I then gave you, with the exception of Mr. Boyce, who had gone back to India.

The result has been a unanimous decision that we cannot take the responsibility of recommending any of them. Although several would certainly be competent as general managers, none of them possess, in my opinion, the combination of qualities really wanted for the Chief Commissionership. Men of that kind, indeed, are not only most difficult to get, but they will not enter into competition with others, and no advertisement will bring them. We believe that the only way is to take plenty of time, and endeavour to find a man of the type you want. I accordingly sent you a telegram to that effect, and was glad to receive your reply this morning saying you approved that course being taken.

I need hardly say, what, indeed, must be well known to you, that men who are in the first rank in the English railway world as general managers receive salaries far higher than the one you offer, so that such men are entirely out of the question. Even men in the second rank, from whom you would have, at best, to choose, get £2,000 a year and more, and could not be tempted to go out except by much higher pay than £2,500. One of these, whose position makes his succession to the chief place of a very great railway practically certain, and who alone of all the men I have seen combines the qualities we want, would not look at less than £3,500. Another, whose position is

also a high one, would not give up his prospects for less than £3,000, and perhaps not for that. An opportunity of finding a fit man willing to take £2,500 might, of course, come at any moment, but it might not come for a long time, and we think it will never come without power to offer the appointment on the spot. Now, this is exactly the responsibility I have so much wished to avoid; and yet, although I should never think of deciding without the advice of such men as Sir E. Watkin and Mr. Findlay, they will not take the entire responsibility for making any appointment now that they realise what the Chief Commissionership in New Zealand means; so that if an appointment has to be made in England at all the chief responsibility for it must rest with the Agent-General.

At this moment I am doubtful as to what I ought to advise, though I know very well what I should personally like to advise, which is simply this: that, while you cannot get the man you really want for £2,500, it is too much for the only kind of man you are likely to get.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

I have, &c.,  
F. D. BELL.

### Enclosure 1 in No. 2.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER.

(Telegram.)

1st May, 1888.

RAILWAY BOARD.—Watkin, Findlay, myself unanimous against taking responsibility recommend any applicants. Our opinion is none possess combination qualities necessary. Quite clear men of that kind will not compete. We believe only way take time and endeavour find such man. Please instruct.

F. D. BELL.

### Enclosure 2 in No. 2.

The Hon. the PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 4th May, 1888.

MESSAGE of 1st May received. Endeavour find such man.

H. A. ATKINSON

### No. 3.

The Hon. the PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 3rd September, 1888.

RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.—Any prospect?

H. A. ATKINSON.

### No. 4.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER.

(Telegram.)

London, 4th September, 1888.

RAILWAYS.—Cannot say prospect any better.

F. D. BELL.

### No. 5.

The Hon. the PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 20th September, 1888.

RAILWAY.—Can you get suitable man for £3,000?

H. A. ATKINSON.

### No. 6.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER.

(Telegram.)

London, 21st September, 1888.

YOUR message received. Will reply soon as possible.

F. D. BELL.

### No. 7.

The Hon. the PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 16th October, 1888.

RAILWAY.—Awaiting reply.

H. A. ATKINSON.

### No. 8.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER.

(Telegram.)

London, 16th October, 1888.

RAILWAYS.—There was first-rate man, but could not persuade him accept £3,000. Am now negotiation another. Hope telegraph particulars soon.

F. D. BELL

## No. 9.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,— 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 8th September, 1888.

I received on the 3rd instant your telegram inquiring whether there was any prospect yet of finding a man fit to be appointed Chief Railway Commissioner, but I had to reply, with regret, that I could not say the prospect was any better than before. The same conditions remain that existed when Sir E. Watkin, Mr. Findlay, and myself decided that we could not advise you to choose any of those who had applied up to that time; and, after varied inquiries, I am more than ever convinced that you cannot get the man you want at the salary offered. A man of that kind must combine a number of qualities which are rarely found in the same person anywhere, and such a man is so highly paid in this country that he would not be tempted for a moment by £2,500 a year. I may, with even more confidence than before, put the matter in this way: The colony cannot have the man it wants for less than £3,000, and it might be the best thing the colony ever did to give him £3,500; but to give £2,500 to any one who does not combine the qualifications absolutely necessary for success would be simply throwing money away. I should never forgive myself if I had induced you to do it.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

## No. 10.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,— 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 6th October, 1888.

I duly received your telegram of the 20th September, inquiring whether a suitable man for the office of Chief Railway Commissioner could be got if the salary were made £3,000 a year.

Out of all the men I have seen there has, up to this time, only been one whom I would for my own part, feel justified in advising you to appoint. I communicated with him at once, but I am sorry to say I have not been able to induce him to entertain the proposition of £3,000. As I have not, however, quite given up the hope that he may reconsider the matter, I wait to send any message till I receive a final answer from him.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

## No. 11.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,— 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 19th October, 1888.

I duly received your telegram of the 16th instant, reminding me that you were still waiting for a reply from me about the Railway Commissioner. You will have seen from my last letter (6th October, No. 1409) that I had not given up the hope of inducing the gentleman to whom I then referred to entertain a proposal for a salary of £3,000; but I now regret to say that he has finally decided to remain in this country. I am negotiating with another person, and hope to send you full particulars by next mail. Annexed are copies of your message and my reply.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

## No. 12.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER.

(Telegram.)

London, 29th October, 1888.

RAILWAYS.—No longer hope find man for £3,000 comes up my ideal. The question is whether Government content with really capable railway-manager. Watkin gone India, but Findlay decisively recommends appointment Francis Ree, second in command Liverpool District; stands next for high promotion North-Western; age, thirty-seven; practically governs traffic, exceeding two millions and a half tonnage annually, against keenest competing railways, canal-steamers, besides, perhaps, heaviest live-stock traffic in England; has two thousand men under immediate charge. The question is whether you will await information necessary to enable the Government to decide, or make appointment reliance upon Findlay's recommendation. I do not believe do better for £3,000.

F. D. BELL.

## No. 13.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,— 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 29th October, 1888.

The telegram I have sent you to-day respecting the appointment of Chief Railway Commissioner has acquainted you that I have at last given up any hope of being able to find, for a salary of £3,000, any one coming up to my own ideal of what the Chief Commissioner should be; and that, to the best of my judgment, the question now before the Government simply is whether they will be content with a thoroughly capable man in the class of railway-managers.

The great powers conferred on the Chief Commissioner indicated very clearly the kind of man that was in the contemplation of Parliament in passing the Act of 1887. But it very early became

my duty not only to dispel the idea of the colony being able to get such a man for the salary fixed by the Act, but to assure you that a man in the first rank of the railway world was in any case entirely out of the question; and that it was hardly probable you could find a man, even in the second rank, for less than £3,000, if not £3,500. When it became necessary to advise you that none of the candidates who had applied could be recommended there were only a very few others about whose fitness we could then have no doubt. One of these was Mr. Eddy, who was immediately taken at £3,000 by New South Wales; another was the only man who (then or since) has seemed to me to possess the combination of qualities really wanted. But, although there had been some private communications with men of that class, it was not until your message of the 20th September arrived, inquiring whether a suitable man could be found for a salary of £3,000, that they could be formally approached; and, as the gentleman to whom I have last referred would not entertain any offer less than £3,500, there were only three left between whom there really seemed to be a choice.

Now, the responsibility of making any choice at all was exceptionally great, on account of my not being in a position to give you the means of comparing the qualifications of the men whom we had approached. For reasons which will, I dare say, have been very obvious to the Government, men of the class to which I am referring will not make any application at all for an appointment, nor allow themselves to be placed in competition with others. No communications, in fact, could have taken place with them at all except in the strictest confidence, and the only course open to Sir Edward Watkin, Mr. Findlay, and myself was to make up our own minds as to the person who ought to be recommended, and simply give the reasons for recommending him, without making any comparison for you as between him and any one else. We had hoped to perform this duty together to the end; but in the interval that elapsed before your telegram of the 20th September, Sir Edward Watkin had made all his plans for a long visit to India, and, although up to the last moment he continued to give the colony his invaluable help, and expressed his willingness to concur in what should be thought best, his departure unavoidably placed the responsibility of making a choice upon Mr. Findlay and myself.

We have now come to the conclusion that Mr. Frank Ree is the best man available to you. Mr. Ree is thirty-seven years of age; he has been for some time second in command (Deputy-Manager) of the Liverpool District on the North-Western Railway, where he has had two thousand men under his immediate charge, and the practical working and control of a goods and mineral traffic of 2,600,000 tons annually, besides, perhaps, the heaviest live-stock traffic in the Kingdom; and where he has successfully held this great traffic in the face of the keenest competition not only of other lines, but of steamers and canals. Before being sent to Liverpool he had been for seven years principal assistant to the Manager of the London District, with the practical management of the North-Western Company's great dépôts at Camden Town and the city, added to an intimate connection with their other dépôts at the Victoria and Albert Docks. His experience has been gained during twenty years' continuous service, the first ten of which were passed in a thorough training in all the departments of the vast North-Western system, and, after that, in the practical working of its traffic in the two greatest ports of the world. He has been sent at various times to conferences of railway and water-carriage managers, a duty requiring exceptional abilities, where such conflicting interests are involved in the measures adopted for developing trade, regulating train-services, and fixing rates. Finally, he stands first on the list for promotion to a higher post of the same service in which his life has been spent.

I enclose a letter from Mr. Ree, briefly describing his position. My own conversations with him have impressed me very favourably; he is a quiet, self-contained man, who knows his own mind; and, as a railway-manager, I do not believe there is any chance of your getting a better man for a salary of £3,000.

I now await your orders as to whether the appointment is to be made now or whether you will postpone a decision till you have received this letter.

I have, &c.,  
F. D. BELL.

### Enclosure 1 in No. 13.

Mr. FRANK REE to the AGENT-GENERAL.

DEAR SIR,—

Liverpool, 26th October, 1888.

The following is a memorandum of my twenty years' services with the London and North-Western Railway. I am at present their Deputy-Manager for Liverpool and the district, with full powers, having the practical working and control of a yearly tonnage of 2,600,000 tons of goods and coal, of which 2,000,000 tons consists of goods alone, which large trade is carried on chiefly in connection with the import and export trade of the Port of Liverpool. The men under my immediate charge number over two thousand, their wages and salaries exceeding £115,000 per annum. I have also the management of about the heaviest live-stock traffic in the Kingdom. The whole of this traffic is not only held together, but increased, in the face of the keenest competition, both by rail, canals, and coasting-steamers. Previous to my Liverpool appointment I was principal assistant to the Manager for the London District, including the great goods-dépôts of Camden Town and Broad Street, and an intimate connection with the shipping interest of Poplar and the Albert and Victoria Dock dépôts of the company. Besides having had the practical working of the traffic in the two most important ports in the world, I had, both in Liverpool and London, to represent and protect the interests of the London and North-Western Railway Company at various conferences of railway and water-carriers, and develop the trade in the two districts by suitable rates and arrangements, train-services, and other facilities.

Sir F. D. Bell.

Yours, &c.,  
FRANK REE.

## Enclosure 2 in No. 13.

Mr. GEORGE FINDLAY to the AGENT-GENERAL.

DEAR SIR FRANCIS,—

Euston Station, London, 26th October, 1888.

This statement is a correct record of Mr. Ree's services, subject to the qualification that he was engaged in London about seven years and at Liverpool three years; in all ten. Prior to that time he had a thorough training in all the departments.

GEORGE FINDLAY, General Manager.

## No. 14.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the HON. the PREMIER.

(Telegram.)

London, 18th December, 1888.

RAILWAYS.—Ree withdraws from being candidate.

F. D. BELL.

## No. 15.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the HON. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 29th December, 1888.

On the 18th instant I received a letter from Mr. Findlay (copy of which is enclosed), intimating that Mr. Ree had withdrawn from being a candidate for the appointment of Chief Railway Commissioner, as the chance of promotion in the North-Western service had arisen. You will see that Mr. Ree came to that decision in consequence of his pending promotion, and not on account of the delay in my being able to tell him whether he would be appointed by the Government. I telegraphed Mr. Ree's withdrawal to you as soon as I received it.

I propose now to await orders before taking any further step. In any case, however, I should wait for Sir E. Watkin's return from India; he has left, and will soon be here.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

I have, &amp;c.,

F. D. BELL.

## Enclosure in No. 15.

Mr. GEORGE FINDLAY to the AGENT GENERAL.

London and North-Western Railway Company,

London, 17th December, 1888.

DEAR SIR FRANCIS,—

The chance of promotion for Mr. Ree has arisen, as I told you it was likely to do, and I am writing, at his request, to say he withdraws his application for the Commissionership of the New Zealand Railways. He has done this after mature consideration as to his chances with this company, and not from any delay in hearing definitely from you. If I can help you further I will gladly do so.

Sir F. Dillon Bell.

Yours, &amp;c.,

GEORGE FINDLAY.

## No. 16.

The Hon. the PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 11th January, 1889.

RAILWAY Board appointed. Mr. McKerrow, Surveyor-General, chief; Maxwell and Hannay deputies.

H. A. ATKINSON.

## No. 17.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the HON. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 11th January, 1889.

I have this moment received your telegram informing me that Mr. McKerrow has been appointed Chief Commissioner, with Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Hannay as the other two Commissioners. I trust I shall not be thought to go out of my proper place if I express the great satisfaction with which I have received this intelligence, for if any opinion of mine could be counted as being of any worth, formed as it has been during a time of prolonged anxiety, and with the constant object and hope of limiting as far as in me lay the risk of what might so easily have been a calamitous mistake in the advice I gave the Government, then I have no hesitation in saying that with a single exception we have never had a chance of getting a man here who could even approach Mr. McKerrow in the combination of high qualities by which your Railway Commission will now be made what it ought to be for the colony.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

I have, &amp;c.,

F. D. BELL.

## No. 18.

The Hon the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the AGENT-GENERAL.

(Memorandum No. 2/89.)

Public Works Office, Wellington, 21st January, 1889.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter (No. 1,502) of the 29th October last, on the subject of the Chief Commissionership of the New Zealand Railways, and recommending the

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appointment of Mr. Frank Ree to the position ; also of your cablegram of the 18th ultimo, announcing the withdrawal of Mr. Ree's candidature.

Under the circumstances, and as it became evident from your letters on the subject that it would be quite hopeless to obtain the services of a gentleman of really first-rate standing in the English railway world for the salary which the Government was authorised to offer, or even for a considerable advance on same, it has been decided, as already intimated to you by cable, to select a Board of Commissioners from amongst the officers already in the Government service in the colony. The salaries agreed to be paid on this basis are as follows : To Mr. KcKerrow, £1,200 a year ; and Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Hannay, £1000 a year each.

In conclusion, I have to thank you very much on behalf of the Government for the very great trouble which you have taken in this matter, and I should be much obliged if you would also be good enough to convey the best thanks of the Government to Sir Edward Watkin and Mr. Findlay for the very valuable assistance which they have rendered to you therein.

EDWIN MITCHELSON,  
Minister for Public Works.

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### No. 19.

MEMORANDUM from the AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 4th April, 1889.

I RECEIVED in due course the Hon. Minister's memorandum of 21st January (No. 2/89) directing me to convey the thanks of the Government to Sir Edward Watkin and Mr. Findlay for the very valuable assistance they gave in connection with the appointment of the Chief Commissioner of Railways. I have already selected two pieces of plate, of the value of £40 each, for presentation to those gentlemen, in accordance with the practice on so many other occasions where the services of distinguished persons have been sought ; and I have now been desired by Sir Edward Watkin and Mr. Findlay to offer their cordial thanks to the Government for the appreciation of those services by the colony.

F. D. BELL.

[*Approximate Cost of Paper.*—Preparation, nil ; printing (1,200 copies), £3 6s. 6d.]

By Authority : GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1889.