

1900.

NEW ZEALAND.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE RT. HON. THE PREMIER AND THE CHIEF HANSARD REPORTER.

RELATIVE TO LETTERS WRITTEN BY THE LATTER COMMENTING ON THE DESPATCH OF
CONTINGENTS TO THE TRANSVAAL.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 6th February, 1900.

My attention has been called to an article in the *Dunedin Evening Star* of the 29th January last, which quotes what purports to be extracts from a letter written by you, dated from Wellington, the 27th October, and published in the *New York Times* of the 26th November, commenting on the action of this and other Australasian Colonies in connection with the despatch of contingents to the Transvaal. I shall be glad to know if you really are the author of the letter in question.

J. Grattan Grey, Esq., Chief *Hansard* Reporter.

I have, &c.,

R. J. SEDDON.

SIR,—

Wellington Terrace, 12th February, 1900.

Your letter dated the 6th instant, *re* the Transvaal War, only reached me to-day.

As my files of American papers have not come to hand for several months past—a matter which I intend to inquire into at the Post-office—I am not in possession of a copy of the *New York Times* nor of the *Evening Star* mentioned in your letter.

If you will kindly supply me with a copy of the *Star*, in order that I may see the extracts mentioned, I shall have much pleasure in supplying you with the information you desire.

I have, &c.,

The Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, Premier.

J. GRATTAN GREY.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 13th February, 1900.

The Premier has directed me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday's date, and in reply to say that he has not got a copy of the *Dunedin Evening Star*, but desires me to send you some extracts from that paper which contain what purports to be your letter, or a portion of it.

J. Grattan Grey, Esq., Wellington Terrace.

I have, &c.,

ALEX. WILLIS.

Extract from *Dunedin Evening Star*, dated 29th January, 1900.

[FROM THE *New York Times*, 26TH NOVEMBER, 1899.]

Wellington, N.Z., 27th October.—Throughout the whole of the British colonies in these latitudes the people have gone wild with excitement over the declaration of war between Great Britain and the little Transvaal Republic. There is no limit to their enthusiasm, and the whole of these democratic communities have become suddenly infected with Imperialism of the most pronounced type. Nobody—very few, at all events—pauses to inquire whether the war is a just one, or whether England has any right to interfere with the internal affairs of the Transvaal. The only thing that concerns them is that Great Britain has resorted to the arbitrament of superior force, and, the Mother-country having done this, the colonies rush to her assistance in crushing poor old Oom Paul and the comparative handful of people in the Transvaal who consider they have a right to govern themselves without foreign interference or dictation. Everybody feels, of course, that the republic must go under, and the immorality of the principle that might is right is completely disregarded in this wave of Imperialism that has swept over the whole of the British possessions on this side of the globe. No sooner was the news received of the declaration of war than offers of assistance were cabled to the Imperial authorities from all the Governments of Australasia, and these were at once accepted, more, perhaps, on account of the moral effect they

would have upon other nations than because of any substantial assistance the colonies could render during the progress of hostilities, because, all told, the combined contingents will not exceed a thousand combatants. To New Zealand the honour belongs of being the first to despatch its mounted rifle corps of 212 officers and men a week ago, and to-day the transport will leave Melbourne conveying to South Africa the total strength from the Colonies of Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania. To outside nations it would appear not a little odd that self-governing colonies seven thousand miles away from the scene of strife should send off bodies of men to do battle against people they have had no quarrel with, or that they should think it necessary to assist in the subjugation of a people who claim the right of self-government the same as they do; but the jingoistic spirit at the Antipodes is too inflamed just now to care anything about the rights or wrongs of the question. What is uppermost in the public mind is that the Transvaal Republic, as a nation, must be effaced, and the whole of the South African Continent painted an Imperial red from the southern limits of Cape Colony to the Equator. Of course, no one for a moment doubts that England can accomplish this unaided by colonial troops, and why, therefore, should these distant colonies interfere at all? In money alone, it will cost the principal of them £50,000 a piece before they have done with the business. Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland have voted £30,000 each, and New Zealand £5,000 in excess of that amount; but if the war lasts for six months they will require to make calls upon their respective Treasuries which will bring each colony's contribution up to at least £50,000. When enthusiasm cools down, no doubt people will begin to think that the money would have been spent to better purpose on public works within the colonies themselves, but they cannot help remembering the fact that a precedent has now been established, and that the colonies will have to take similar action upon any future occasion, even without any justification for the belief (as in the present instance) that the safety of the Empire is endangered.

Wellington Terrace, Wellington, 15th February, 1900.

SIR,—I am in receipt of your letter of 13th instant, enclosing an extract from the *Dunedin Evening Star* of 29th January, containing portions of my article to the *New York Times*, published in that influential journal of 26th November, 1899.

I will preface my reply to your request for information as to the authorship of that article by observing that this is not the first occasion on which this same individual connected with the *Dunedin Evening Star* has displayed the strongest possible animosity against me under the cloak of anonymity, and has shown personal malice to an extent which must meet with the reprobation of all honest, upright, and respectable journalists. The individual in question, however, is not a journalist of any weight or position outside the parochial radius of that paper's circulation, and very little within that limited area. Professional etiquette, straightforwardness, or the instincts of journalistic camaraderie, could not be expected from such an uncultured source; and I leave him, as all paltry things like him should be left, to the contemplation of his own littleness and to the enjoyment of whatever fruits may come from the ventilation of his jealousy and maliciousness. He has my assurance, however, that, whether or not he succeeds in his present attempt to do me an injury, it is a matter which will neither derange my appetite nor induce insomnia.

As to the article contributed to the *New York Times* from which these extracts have been republished, I beg to inform you that I was the author of that article, and that I adhere to the opinions therein expressed regardless of consequences.

In the first place, let me inform you that throughout my life I have belonged to the party of peace, and have been an uncompromising opponent of recourse to war for the settlement of international difficulties. I had made a special study of the Transvaal question, had read all the available literature connected with the subject from every standpoint, and had become, as an impartial and conscientious observer of events, a staunch adherent of the humane and enlightened policy of England's greatest Commoner, Mr. Gladstone, with regard to the Transvaal Republic. When war was first hinted at, in the winter months of last year, I could not bring myself to believe that hostilities would actually eventuate, and made no disguise of my sentiments that, if war did ensue, it would be one of the most unjust and unrighteous wars recorded in history. I could not, however, believe that the British nation would allow itself to be deluded by a band of greedy and grasping capitalists into undertaking a war against a people whose right to self-government had been fully recognised; for I maintain that it is a war which has been fomented by capitalists, and it is lamentable to think that so much precious blood has been, and will be, spilt and so much treasure expended at the instigation of these moneyed magnates for purposes of their own aggrandisement. Does anyone in his proper senses, anyone with the smallest atom of intelligence or fair-mindedness, really believe that but for the gold and diamond discoveries in South Africa the Boers would ever have been disturbed in their isolation? All candid and thoughtful men, however reluctant they may be at this juncture to confess it, must feel in their hearts that the greed of unscrupulous capitalists is in truth the real *raison d'être* of the present deplorable conflict, the primary cause which lies at the bottom of the hideous tragedy which is now being enacted in South Africa.

Immediately before and after the commencement of hostilities I regarded with deepest sorrow the wave of jingoistic hysteria that inundated these colonies, the unreasoning and unthinking manner in which this jingoistic spirit was fanned, until provincial jealousies and rivalries have now actually developed in this frantic desire to send contingents to South Africa beyond anything that was ever contemplated when the movement began.

When I considered the marvellous wealth of Great Britain, her inexhaustible resources in men and money, her population of forty-four millions of people to draw combatants from, her powerful navy to defend her against any possible or probable concert of European nations, I could not suppose that England required assistance from her far-off colonies in settling her differences with a comparative handful of people like the Boers—two hemmed-in republics in South Africa, without a seaboard and without ports for replenishing supplies, which in course of time must

become exhausted. All these considerations forced me to the conclusion that it was an act of the supremest folly to drain the colonies of their population for the purpose of doing battle seven thousand miles away in a struggle about the eventual issue of which there could not be the slightest anxiety or doubt.

If it was considered necessary to impress foreign powers with the moral lesson of colonial loyalty and enthusiasm by the dispatch of a first contingent from each, does it not strike one that the good effect of that lesson is likely to be destroyed by the sending of contingent after contingent upon the same unfortunate errand? Will not this apparently unrestricted exodus to South Africa create an impression in unfriendly quarters that England is in extremities, and that her prestige and prowess are in imminent difficulty and peril? I am not so pessimistic as to suppose for one moment that she is, or is at all likely to be, in such straits, or that her foremost prestige amongst the nations of the earth stands the slightest danger of not being maintained in this war with the Boers; but, as an Australasian, I protest against this serious diminution of our population, against this maddened rush from our shores when, if we look to our own requirements, we want to keep every man of them here. What is the state of the defences in any one of the Australasian colonies? Will any one say for one moment—or, if he says it, does he really believe it—that our defences are in an effective condition? Is there any difficulty in realising the awkward position these colonies might be placed in at any moment in the event of any European complications that might arise? In this position of affairs, why send the best physical types of our young men, the very flower of our population, out of the country, when it is population, and population of that stamp, we stand most in need of? Why contribute funds to the wealthiest nation on earth when the money could be more easily and legitimately expended in placing ourselves in a position to repel an enemy?

In the pursuit of my journalistic profession I have given expression to these views. That they are not popular with the present unthinking and uninformed multitude I doubt not, but they are my deep-rooted and conscientious convictions nevertheless, and if I am to suffer for the candid and fearless exposition of them, I find solace in the belief that they will be acquiesced in eventually, when the feverish pulse of the majority gets restored to its normal condition, and calmness supplants the existing excitement. It is all very well for people just now to shout themselves hoarse, to be carried away by waving banners and by the intoxicating influences of martial airs; only wait until the score comes to be reckoned up, until the piper has to be paid, and depend upon it they will dance to a less agreeable tune. At the same time, I feel convinced that even in this small community there are hundreds, nay thousands, of people who think exactly as I do on the subject, and only refrain from giving vent to their feelings in order to escape insult and abuse from persons who have allowed this demon of jingoism to make captive of their reason, and to warp their better and calmer judgment.

It is one of the highest functions of every honest, well-meaning, and straightforward journalist to do all he can on occasions such as this to stem the current of popular frenzy, to inculcate the salutary ideas of moderation, and to strive all he knows to direct public opinion into the best and safest channels. In my humble capacity, this is precisely what I have endeavoured to do, profoundly and conscientiously believing that I was doing right, and believing also that I was living in a free and enlightened country. Is it possible that I have been under a delusion all the best years of my life, and that I am now to realise that freedom of thought and speech in New Zealand—that boasted palladium of individual and collective liberty—is nothing but a myth after all?

I remain, &c.,

The Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, Premier.

J. GRATTAN GREY.

EXTRACT FROM APPENDICES TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, dated 14th September, 1899.

Reporting Debates and Printing Committee.

The Hon. Major Steward, from the Reporting Debates and Printing Committee, brought up a report relative to *Hansard* reporters doing outside political work, together with minutes of proceedings and exhibits; and the report was read as follows:—

“The Reporting Debates and Printing Committee has the honour to report, in connection with the statements made by Mr. Morrison, M.H.R., in Committee of Supply, relative to Mr. J. Grattan Grey, chief of the *Hansard* staff, and also in connection with the question of *Hansard* reporters doing outside political work, that it has come to the following resolutions:—

“That the Committee has been unable to obtain a copy of the article contributed to the *New York Times*, and extracts from which were quoted in a speech in the House by Mr. Morrison, member for Caversham.

“That Mr. J. Grattan Grey admits that the article referred to was published in that journal over his name, but states that his official designation was not appended or attached thereto.

“That the terms of Mr. Grey’s appointment expressly accord him ‘liberty, after completion of *Hansard* each session, to take outside work.’

“That this Committee recommends that, in future, members of the *Hansard* staff should not actively participate in New Zealand politics, by writing articles for publication or otherwise; although it sees no objection to members of the staff being employed in reporting or literary work when not required to attend to their parliamentary duties.”

A copy of the minutes of the proceedings is attached, together with exhibits.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SIR,—

Wellington Terrace, Wellington, 21st February, 1900.

In order to forestall any further crawling officiousness and malignity on the part of the Dunedin *Star* man, I beg to inform you that an article of mine on the Samoan question appeared in the *New York Times* of 25th December, 1899.

I have now the honour to forward the subjoined extracts for your information.

The Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, Premier.

I remain, &c.,

J. GRATTAN GREY.

[From the *New York Times*, 24th December, 1899.]

“No more unwelcome tidings could have been wanted to Australasia than that Great Britain had come to an arrangement with Germany to hand over to that power the control and management of the lion's share of Samoa. The transfer has occurred at a time when there is little disposition to call into question the wisdom of Great Britain in surrendering Samoa without previously taking the colonies into her confidence on the question. The outbreak of the Transvaal War has brought with it a tidal wave of Imperialism all over the Colonies of Australasia, and the feeling is so intense that, for a moment, the colonists generally are blind to the danger of having a great European power like Germany brought into such close proximity to their shores. Had the proposal been put before them in a time of peace, there would have been a howl of indignation from all the British dependencies in these seas, and a stubborn diplomatic effort to prevent Germany from obtaining the foothold she has gained in Samoa.

Powerless as the colonies are now, without any hope of getting the thing undone, a strong undercurrent of feeling prevails that Great Britain has not treated the Australian Colonies as she ought to have done, and this sense of injustice will become intensified with the restoration of peace and a more thorough realisation of the dangers to which Germany's presence as a close and powerful neighbour exposes us. It is well known that Germany's interference in Samoan affairs has always been repugnant to the wishes of the majority of the inhabitants of that country, and no less to Australasians, whose chief desire has ever been to keep foreign European control out of the Southern Pacific as much as possible. To this end resistance has always been offered against the acquisition of the New Hebrides by France, and, in spite of this, Samoa has been quietly surrendered to Germany as an expedient of British policy to cultivate the friendship of that nation in a fleeting emergency.

The only atom of consolation we can discover in the arrangement is that Tutuila is to be American, and that an alliance between the two great English-speaking nations of the world can at any time minimise the dangers arising from such an undesirable Germanic proximity to our coasts. One immediate effect of the handing over of Samoa to Germany will be this: it will impress the colonies with the necessity of inaugurating and gradually perfecting a combined system of defence on land and sea, as well for internal safety as for the protection of their commerce with the outside world, and the insuring of a greater influence in the councils of the Mother-land.”

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