

follow the new s.s. "Sierra," as the "Sonoma," the second steamer, is scarcely likely to have reached San Francisco by the 12th December.

I regret to learn from your reply to my cable message of the 2nd instant [see also No. 94] that the London Post Office is bound, under the Postal Union Convention, to pay over the Pacific transit-charges to the United States Post Office, instead of this colony as heretofore, and I am now in communication with the Postmaster-General at Washington, asking him to consent to the continuance of the course followed under the contract with the Union Steam Ship Company.

I should be glad if you would send me time-tables of the Atlantic steamers, particularly those which will be likely to convey our mails outward and inward. It would be a convenience if you could arrange with the Atlantic steamship companies to place you on their regular distribution-list of time-tables, so that the Postmaster-General could be informed of any changes which are likely to affect the transport of our mails.

I have, &c.,

J. G. WARD, for the Premier.

The Hon. W. P. Reeves, Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

No. 30.

The SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington, to the J. D. SPRECKELS AND BROTHERS COMPANY, San Francisco.

General Post Office, Wellington, 27th October, 1900.

GENTLEMEN,—

San Francisco Mail-service.

I have the honour to forward herewith six copies of the resolutions passed by the House of Representatives on the 11th instant, authorising the Government to enter into a temporary agreement with your company for the continuance of the San Francisco mail-service every three weeks, in the place of the present four-weekly service, for twelve months from about the 21st proximo; payment for mails from the colony to be made on the basis of weight, as at present—namely, 10s. 5d. per pound for letters, 1s. per pound for books, and 6d. per pound for newspapers.

Immediately after the passing of the resolutions, Mr. H. Stephenson Smith, Resident Agent for this colony in San Francisco, was requested to communicate the fact to your company; and the Postmaster-General is in receipt of a letter from Mr. Witheford, M.H.R., forwarding copy of a cable message from you, in which you agree to convey the mails on the poundage basis, and also announce the projected sailings from San Francisco up to the 23rd January.

You are no doubt aware of the nature of the contract with the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand, which, at the request of the company, has been cancelled as from the completion of the "Moana's" inward service this month and the arrival of the "Mariposa" at San Francisco about the 16th proximo.

Under paragraph 8 of the resolutions passed by the House of Representatives the provisions of the agreement with the Union Steam Ship Company are to be followed so far as they apply, and I shall be obliged if you will indicate in what way you consider the contract should be altered to suit the new circumstances. Should Mr. Spreckels, the president of your company, find it practicable to visit New Zealand by the first trip of the "Sierra" or "Sonoma," as it is understood he intends doing, the consideration and signing of the contract may stand over until his arrival, but otherwise it would be exceedingly convenient if some person could be empowered to act on your company's behalf.

As there will be no steamer from Auckland next month, it is found necessary to send an additional Mail-agent and assistant by the "Mariposa" to take up the work of sorting the mails which will be brought to the colony by the "Sierra." Mr. Isbister will take up duty on the "Sierra," and his first work will be the fitting-up of the mail-sorting room. No doubt you will instruct the commander of the steamer to facilitate the work, and to render any necessary assistance. I am without a plan of the proposed mail-sorting space and mail-rooms on the new steamers, but it is understood that your company intends to offer much superior accommodation to that on board the "Mariposa" and the "Alameda."

I have, &c.,

W. GRAY, Secretary.

Messrs. the J. D. Spreckels and Brothers Company, San Francisco.

No. 31.

The Hon. the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Wellington, to Mr. J. H. WITHEFORD, M.H.R., Auckland.

(Telegram.)

General Post Office, Wellington, 10th November, 1900.

HAVE received cablegram from Washington Post Office [No. 108], in reply to one sent a few days ago, advising that Spreckels is not authorised to arrange with us for mail-conveyance from San Francisco by his new steamers, and that the British closed mails will be despatched hereafter under Postal Union conditions. This is a very awkward position, and may hamper arrangements, especially if the Washington office should object to our making contract with Spreckels. We had been refused a copy of the contract, but Mr. Spreckels's letters to the Government, placing the new service at our disposal [Nos. 5 and 9, F.-6, 1900], led us to believe that he was empowered to enter into a contract with New Zealand. The exact position should be ascertained without delay, and I suggest that you cable Spreckels, informing him of the purport of our cablegram from Washington, and asking him to inform you whether he is or is not empowered to make contract with this Government, or whether the United States Post Office will insist on the service being used by New Zealand as provided under the Postal Union regulations.