

In reply I beg to state that our standing instructions to Sydney office are that intercolonial vessels for Wellington must be despatched, whenever possible, not later than 2 p.m., but I regret to say that in many instances it is not possible to adhere to this regulation as closely as we could wish. The principal causes of delay are as follows: Scarcity of, and difficulties in connection with, labour; detention in Newcastle through scarcity of coal, or difficulty in obtaining berthage; late arrival of Home and coastal steamers with passengers, and cargo of an urgent and perishable nature, for transshipment to New Zealand. We are also at times approached by passengers to detain steamers until evening for the purpose of enabling them to attend cricket and football matches, or events of a like nature, horse-races, &c. In addition to this, there is also the risk of detention on the passage owing to adverse weather conditions.

By this week's mail we are again writing our Sydney manager, emphasizing our desire that intercolonial vessels should be despatched as early as possible, so that every chance will be afforded of making regular connection with the Main Trunk line.

I have, &c.,

D. A. AIKEN,

Assistant General Manager.

The Secretary, General Post Office, Wellington.

[Suez Conn. 10/165.]

No. 166.

The Right Hon. the PRIME MINISTER to the HIGH COMMISSIONER.

SIR,—

Prime Minister's Office, Wellington, 1st December, 1910.

In reference to your memorandum of the 6th October, I have the honour to inform you that under ordinary conditions the mails from New Zealand for the United Kingdom despatched *via* Suez make a close connection in Australia. Since July last the mail has missed the connection twice, in each case the failure being due to the rough weather experienced on the Tasman Sea. When the connection is missed in future you will be specially informed by a cable message, reading "Suez despatch [*Date of departure from Wellington*] missed." When you receive such advice I shall be glad if you will communicate it to the London Post Office, and give notice publicly as far as you can.

I have, &c.,

J. G. WARD,

Prime Minister.

The Hon. Sir W. Hall-Jones, K.C.M.G.,

High Commissioner for New Zealand, London.

[Suez Conn. 10/169.]

No. 167.

The SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington, to the SECRETARY, Auckland Chamber of Commerce, Auckland.

SIR,—

General Post Office, Wellington, 6th December, 1910.

I have the honour, by direction, to refer to your letter of the 14th ultimo respecting the inconvenience caused to business men at Auckland through the mails from the United Kingdom and Australia, despatched from Sydney on Saturdays, failing frequently to connect with the mail-train at Wellington on Wednesdays.

The matter was brought under the notice of the Union Steam Ship Company, to learn whether there was any prospect of the steamers from Sydney arriving in Wellington, as a general rule, on Wednesday in time to enable the Auckland mails to be despatched by the mail-train the same day. The Department is in receipt of a reply from the general manager of the company to the effect that the company's standing instructions to its Sydney office are that intercolonial vessels for Wellington must be despatched, whenever possible, not later than 2 p.m. It is stated, however, that in many instances it is not possible to adhere to these instructions as closely as the company could desire. The principal causes of delay are given as follows: The scarcity of, and difficulties in connection with, labour; the detention of the vessels in Newcastle through scarcity of coal, or difficulty in obtaining berthage; the late arrival of Home and coastal steamers with passengers, and cargo of an urgent and perishable nature, for transshipment to New Zealand; the requests to hold steamers until the evening to enable the passengers to attend cricket and football matches, horse-races, &c.; the risk of detention on the passage owing to adverse weather conditions.

The general manager adds that he was about to write again to the Sydney office, emphasizing the company's desire that intercolonial vessels be despatched as early as possible so that every chance should be afforded of making regular connections with the Main Trunk express train.

I have, &c.,

D. ROBERTSON, Secretary.

The Secretary, Auckland Chamber of Commerce, Auckland.

[Suez Conn. 10/171.]

No. 168.

The SECRETARY, Auckland Chamber of Commerce, Auckland, to the SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington.

SIR,—

Auckland Chamber of Commerce, Auckland, 9th December, 1910.

Your letter of 6th instant relative to the Sydney-Wellington steamer service was submitted to my council at its meeting yesterday, and I am directed to thank you for the attention you have given the matter. My council trusts that your representations to the Union Steam Ship Company may result in an improvement in the service, which of late has been far from satisfactory. During the last three months the steamer from Sydney to Wellington has on five occasions failed to connect with the mail-train on Wednesdays.

I have, &c.,

A. J. DENNISTON, Secretary.

The Secretary, General Post Office, Wellington.

[Suez Conn. 10/173.]