

1856.

VICTORIA.

R E P O R T

FROM THE

Select Committee of the Legislative Council

ON

STEAM POSTAL COMMUNICATION

WITH

GREAT BRITAIN;

TOGETHER WITH THE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE.

ORDERED BY THE COUNCIL TO BE PRINTED,

28th FEBRUARY, 1856.

By Authority :

JOHN FERRES, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

EXTRACTED FROM THE MINUTES.

TUESDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY, 1856.

STEAM POSTAL COMMUNICATION WITH GREAT BRITAIN.—Mr. Greeves moved, pursuant to *amended* notice, That a Select Committee be appointed to consider the propriety of immediately establishing a line of steamers between Melbourne and Point de Galle or "Singapore," with power to take evidence; such Committee to consist of the Chief Secretary, the Commissioner of Trade and Customs, the Treasurer, Mr. Strachan, Mr. Henty, Mr. O'Shanassy, Mr. McCulloch, Mr. Goodman, and the Mover.

Mr. Longden moved, as an amendment, That the following words be inserted after the word "Singapore," viz., "or such other point as may be agreed upon."

Debate ensued.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put and negatived.

Question—That a Select Committee be appointed to consider the propriety of immediately establishing a line of steamers between Melbourne and Point de Galle or Singapore, with power to take evidence; such Committee to consist of the Chief Secretary, the Commissioner of Trade and Customs, the Treasurer, Mr. Strachan, Mr. Henty, Mr. O'Shanassy, Mr. McCulloch, Mr. Goodman, and the Mover—put and passed.

WEDNESDAY, 27TH FEBRUARY, 1856.

PAPERS.—The Treasurer, by command of His Excellency the Officer administering the Government, laid upon the Table of the Council the undermentioned papers, viz. :

Steam Postal Communication.—Despatch from the Right Honorable the Secretary of State respecting Steam Postal Communication with the United Kingdom,

Ordered to be printed and referred to the Select Committee now sitting on this subject.

R E P O R T.

THE SELECT COMMITTEE of the Legislative Council appointed to consider the propriety of immediately establishing a line of steamers between Melbourne and Point de Galle, or Singapore, have the honor to report to your Honorable Council as follows:—

After having examined several witnesses as to the suitability of Colonial steam vessels for the proposed service, and various other matters relating thereto, your Committee had the satisfaction of having before them the Despatch of the Right Honorable the Secretary of State, dated 4th December, 1855, which was laid on the Table of your Honorable House yesterday.

As this Report embodies a plan for the restoration of steam communication with England, which will secure all the essential requirements, as determined by the Government of Victoria and your Honorable House, the Committee do not think it necessary to pursue their inquiries further; and your Committee recommend that the plan proposed by the Home Government be definitively approved and adopted.

Considering the large grant for the same object made by the Legislature of New South Wales (£25,000), your Committee recommend that an arrangement be immediately made with the Government of New South Wales to undertake at once the responsibility of providing, in proportion to their respective appropriations, the Colonial moiety of the cost of establishing this service without incurring the great delay that must ensue by waiting for the formal concurrence of the Legislatures of Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia, and New Zealand.

The obvious advantage to those Colonies, as well as ourselves, of speedy action, puts their ultimate concurrence beyond doubt. Besides which it will be in our power to reimburse this Colony by an intercolonial postage until final arrangements are made.

Should, however, the Government of New South Wales not agree, your Committee recommend that it be arranged with the Home Government for Victoria to bear the entire Colonial moiety of the line from England to Melbourne, this Colony having the power to arrange with all the other Colonies for the charge of their mails.

Under any circumstances, your Committee are of opinion that the system of compulsory prepayment must be made universal.

Although your Committee thus agree in the main points of the proposal of the Home Government, there are some minor subjects which it is desirable to press upon the attention of the Home Government—such as the mail vessels making a longer stay at Melbourne on the homeward route than twenty-four hours, and some arrangement for the conveyance of passengers from Australia without the risk of detention at Point de Galle, should that route be adopted.

And your Committee being aware that two members of your Honorable House (the Honorable the Treasurer, and Mr. William Nicholson) are about to proceed to England, recommend that those gentlemen, in conjunction with Mr. W. Rutledge, recently a member of your Honorable House, and who has devoted much attention in England to this subject, be requested to act on behalf of this Colony in treating with the Home Government and the contractors in forwarding as much as possible the views expressed in this Report, and the re-establishment, with the least possible delay, of steam communication.

(Signed)

AUGUSTUS F. A. GREEVES,

Chairman.

Committee Room,
28th February, 1856.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE.

WEDNESDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY, 1856.

Members present:—

The Chief Secretary, The Commissioner of Trade and Customs, Mr. Strachan, Mr. Henty,
The Treasurer, Mr. O'Shanassy, Mr. Greeves.

Mr. Greeves was called to the Chair.

Resolved:—

That the Treasurer be requested to obtain returns from the adjoining Colonies on the subject referred to the Committee.

Course of proceeding discussed.

Adjourned to Friday next, at half-past Eleven o'clock.

FRIDAY, 22ND FEBRUARY, 1856.

Members present:—

Mr. Greeves in the Chair; The Chief Secretary, The Commissioner of Trade and Customs,
The Treasurer, Mr. Strachan, Mr. Henty, Mr. O'Shanassy, Mr. Goodman.

Mr. Henry Bowden called in and examined.

Alexander McCrae, Esq., Postmaster General, called in and examined.

Adjourned to Tuesday next, at Eleven o'clock.

TUESDAY, 26TH FEBRUARY, 1856.

Members present:—

Mr. Greeves in the Chair; the Treasurer, Mr. Goodman, Mr. McCulloch.

Captain Godfrey Bentley called in and examined.

Mr. Owen Copner Edmonds called in and examined.

Adjourned to Thursday next at Eleven o'clock.

THURSDAY, 28TH FEBRUARY, 1856.

Members present:—

Mr. Greeves in the Chair; The Chief Secretary, Mr. Henty, The Treasurer, The Commissioner
of Trade and Customs, Mr. McCulloch.

Robert Campbell, Esq., called in and examined.

Mr. George Barber called in and examined.

Order read referring to this Committee copy Despatch from the Right Honorable the
Secretary of State respecting Steam Postal communication with the United Kingdom.

Despatch read and considered.

Resolved:—

That it is unnecessary to take further evidence, and that in the opinion of this Committee it
is also unnecessary that the evidence already taken by the Committee be printed.

Draft Report read and agreed to.

Chairman ordered to report.