

1877.

VICTORIA.

STEAM POSTAL SERVICE.

COPY OF LETTER FROM THE CHIEF SECRETARY OF VICTORIA TO THE AGENT-GENERAL, LONDON, CONVEYING INSTRUCTIONS TO CALL FOR TENDERS FOR AN OCEAN MAIL SERVICE TO ALTERNATE FORTNIGHTLY WITH THE SERVICE *VIA SUEZ*.

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 8th November 1877.

(Copy.)

Victoria.

No. 4488.

Chief Secretary's Office, Melbourne, 4th October 1877.

SIR,

I am most anxious to arrange a through Ocean Mail Service which, alternating with that *via Suez*, would give the colony practically a fortnightly mail. The protracted negotiations with Messrs. Green and Co. have hitherto resulted in nothing. The various telegrams which have passed between Victoria and London were read by myself in the Assembly, and since then the question has been debated, at the instance of Mr. Service, on the motion that the Speaker do leave the Chair on going into Committee of Supply. No resolution was submitted. The debate occupied some three or four hours, and was tolerably exhaustive of the subject. I then expressed my regret that Messrs. Green and Co. had not renewed the offer originally submitted through you to Sir James McCulloch, and added that, in the present aspect of the case, I could see no other satisfactory course than to call for tenders in London. It is to instruct you in that particular that I now write. The following are essential elements in any contract the Government would sign:—

Vessels—Of not less than 4,000 tons, and full horse-power.

Time—Forty (40) days or less.

Contract—For five (5) years.

The Peninsular and Oriental contract will expire by notice in about two years; and no doubt the present contract time will be considerably reduced in any future arrangement.

Before this letter is to hand you will doubtless have received by cable the exact particulars you are to include in your advertisement for tenders.

I desire, however, to state that you are at liberty to forward at any time, and as promptly as possible, any substantial proposal you receive which commends itself to your judgment as fully complying with the wants and requirements of the colony.

Other things being equal, promptitude in commencing the service should be sought, and as moderate a subsidy as possible. With respect to the latter, it would be well to have it regulated by the length of voyage: so much for 40 days, and so much for 38, 37, 36, and 35 days respectively.

As the Government are most anxious to have a definite and satisfactory proposal ready to submit to Parliament on its meeting in May next, I can only urge you to make every possible inquiry and to keep me well informed on the matter.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) GRAHAM BERRY.

Copy of Telegram from Chief Secretary to Agent-General, London.

31 Oct. 1877.

Cape mail. Government determined public competition. Letter last mail. Advertise at once four weekly service, Melbourne direct. Canal optional. Vessels, four thousand tons; tenders, subsidy 40 days; additional for 38, 37, 36, and 35 days; moderate passage money, all classes. Contract, five years. Early announcement desired.

(Signed) GRAHAM BERRY.

[*Approximate Cost of Paper*.—Preparation, not given; Printing (775 copies), £1 13s. 0d.]