

*Apportionment of Subsidy.*

On the recommendation—

“That the sea-transit rates collected from other countries or colonies making use of the service be placed to the credit of the subsidy, together with any fines that may be inflicted, the balance of the subsidy to be apportioned between the United Kingdom on the one part and the contracting colonies collectively on the other part, on the basis of the amount of mail matter they respectively despatch, the colonies, parties to the contract, to apportion their contribution on the basis of population as at present”—

The PRESIDENT said: It will be noticed that there is a considerable alteration proposed here as regard the contribution of the United Kingdom. At present the United Kingdom pays some £95,000 as against £75,000, the collective contribution of these colonies. The United Kingdom now pays a lump sum, and it is now proposed that they should contribute on the basis of the proportion of mail matter. That is a fair proposal.

Question put and passed.

*Amendment of P. and O. Contract.*

Recommendation—

“That clause 7 of the P. and O. contract be amended in regard to the conveyance of the Indian-China mails connecting at Colombo. Should it be deemed necessary for the Australian steamers to carry these mails in connection with the new contract between Colombo and Brindisi, we consider the Postal Union rates should be paid by the countries despatching those mails, such rates to be dealt with in manner provided for above”—

Put and passed.

*Time of Departure of Mails from Adelaide.*

On the recommendation—

“That the day of departure from Adelaide be Thursday, at 1 p.m., reaching Albany in seventy-two hours”—

Mr. C. TODD (S.A.) said: Last evening I received the following telegram from the Hon. Mr. Copley:—“Large deputation of principal merchants and other business people waited on me this morning asking that in the new mail contracts it should be stipulated that the outward-bound steamers should leave here at 4 p.m. instead of noon as at present. Also asking that the alteration should be made now if possible. Replied would wire you. Held out very little hope for change at present but would press the point for new contract. It is of considerable consequence to us saving day's interest on all bank drafts.” From the very first the merchants of Adelaide have raised considerable objection to the steamers sailing at 1 o'clock. The London Post Office fixed the hour at noon, but, as the Melbourne express train arrives about a quarter-past 10 o'clock in the morning, it is found to be impossible to get the steamers away before 1 o'clock. Both the companies have complained to me, and the Melbourne agents have also sent in complaints about their being delayed for an hour in Adelaide in consequence of the late arrival of the Melbourne express. On the other hand, my Government wish to consult the convenience and interests of our own population as far as possible; and the time now fixed for closing the mails prevents them from obtaining drafts on the day of the departure of the mail. I therefore move that the hour of departure be 4 o'clock, instead of 1 o'clock, as proposed.

Mr. R. A. SHOLL (W.A.): The permanent heads of the departments kindly fixed the hour at my suggestion that it should be not later than 1 o'clock. As a matter of fact, it is only a very fast steamer like the “Britannia” which has hitherto been able to reach Albany in seventy-two hours, and the consequence would be that our mails may not arrive at Albany before 5 o'clock when the overland special train leaves for Perth. The railway to Beverley is in the hands of a private company, to whom the Government, unfortunately, cannot dictate, and who will not be dictated to. The mails would miss the special train, and could not leave until the next morning by ordinary train, which reaches Beverley that night and remains there until the following morning; thus another twelve hours would be lost. At present the special train leaves Beverley in time to get to Perth at half-past 11 o'clock, so that there would be a delay of twenty-four hours if that train was missed. If the departure of the steamer from Adelaide is delayed until 4 o'clock, as proposed, the special train will certainly be missed. I trust it will not be agreed to. I may mention that under the accelerated service proposed for the next ocean mail contract we shall lose twenty-four hours in the receipt of our English mails through their losing this same train; and I therefore ask the Conference to allow the hour of departure to remain at 1 o'clock, and not cause us to lose a day both ways.

The PRESIDENT: After listening to the representations made by Mr. Sholl, on behalf of Western Australia, we must show that we are actuated by a spirit of forbearance and by a spirit of give and take. He has made out a good case, and I do not see why the Western Australian mails should be inconvenienced in the way mentioned, in order to accommodate the people of South Australia. I am sure that Mr. Todd, with his usual liberality and general view of the position, will admit that he is on the wrong side of the ship on this occasion. The only reason he gave was that the merchants of Adelaide could not get their bank drafts by 1 o'clock.

Mr. C. TODD: Before the mail closes at 10 o'clock.

The PRESIDENT: My own experience, as a man of business for many years, enables me to say that any merchant who is anxious to get a draft in time to catch the mail can order his draft the night before, and send in his cheque for it at 10 o'clock. By doing that no inconvenience need arise. Accounts can be made up, and the amount of the draft known the day before, or else the merchants would be working in very close quarters if they stood a chance of being late. There would be no difficulty in obtaining drafts, and I hope the decision of the Conference will be to give Western Australia the little facility that it requires at our hands, and gracefully concede the point.

Mr.