

MESSAGE No. 23.

His Excellency the Officer administering the Government forwards to the House of Representatives copies of two Circular Despatches which have been received from Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies respecting the adoption of a general scheme for extending the benefits of a cheap and uniform rate of Postage to Colonial correspondence.

His Excellency requests the attention of the House to the necessity of his being informed as soon as possible whether the Colony is prepared to acquiesce in the proposed general scheme.

Secretary of State to
Sir George Grey, 1st
April, 1854.

Secretary of State to
Sir George Grey, 5th
April, 1853.

R. H. WYNYARD.

Government House,
Auckland, 1st August, 1854.

(Circular.)

Downing Street,
1st April, 1854.

Sir,—

Referring to my circular Despatch of the 5th April, 1853, in which it was suggested that the Colony under your Government should join in the adoption of a general scheme for extending the benefits of a cheap and uniform rate of Postage to Colonial correspondence, I have now to acquaint you that it has been unavoidably determined so far to modify that arrangement as to abandon for the present the intention of imposing a charge upon newspapers between this country and the several Colonies, and only to carry into effect the contemplated reduction of postage on letters, with the extension to Parliamentary proceedings of the charges and regulations set forth in the Colonial Book Post.

As no answer has yet been received from you to my Circular Despatch of the 5th of April last, I have to call your attention to the necessity of your informing me, without delay, whether the Colony under your Government is prepared to acquiesce in the proposed general scheme.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

(Signed)

NEWCASTLE.

Governor

Sir George Grey, K.C.B.,
&c. &c.

(Circular.)

Downing Street,
5th April, 1854.

Sir,—

With reference to Earl Grey's circular Despatch of the 27th December, 1850, recommending the establishment of a Book postal communication between this country and the British Colonies, I have to acquaint you that it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to carry out a suggestion made by my predecessor, Sir John Pakington, for extending the benefit of a cheap and uniform postage to Colonial correspondence.

Her Majesty's Government will be prepared to adopt an uniform six-penny rate for all Colonial letters within a specified rate so soon as circumstances which the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury may think it their duty to take into consideration will permit, upon its being ascertained that those Colonies whose postal arrangements are independent of this country are willing to acquiesce in the proposed arrangement.

I transmit, for your information and guidance a copy of the correspondence which has passed on this subject between this office and the General Post Office, and I shall be happy to receive your report in favour of including the Colony under your Government in the proposed scheme. But you must bear in mind that it is essential to the effectual working of the scheme that it be adopted in its integrity by the Colonies.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

(Signed)

NEWCASTLE.

Governor

Sir George Grey, K. . B.
&c. &c.

Colonial Office, 21st
September, 1852.

Post Office, 8th Oct.,
1852.

Colonial Office, 8th
Nov. 1852.

Post Office, 19th
March, 1853.

Downing-street,
21st September, 1852

Sir,—

I am directed by Secretary Sir John Pakington to acquaint you, for the information of the Postmaster-General, that he has received numerous applications, both from the Colonies and from this country, praying that the benefits of a cheap and uniform postage may be extended to Colonial communication.

I am desired to inform you that Sir John Pakington concurs with the petitioners as to the advantages which would result from the concession, and that he is favourably disposed towards it if the arrangement can be effected without serious difficulty: and I am to request that you will move the Earl of Hardwicke to favour Sir John Pakington with his opinion on the subject

I am also directed to acquaint you, that owing to the large and increasing amount of emigration to the British Colonies, and to the desire of persons who prosper there to send home money in order to assist their relations to follow them from this country, the want has grown up of an opportunity for numerous small remittances from the Colonies. From North America they are made to a very large amount indeed, which was estimated at more than £1,000,000 sterling in the past year, through the intervention of private firms; but those firms complain much of the trouble and responsibility which they involve, and in some cases where houses of inferior respectability may be employed the poor are liable to be defrauded of the benefit intended for them. There can be no doubt that the practice on the part of persons who have improved their condition by emigration, of sending home money to enable their friends to follow them is highly laudable, and that it is deserving of encouragement both in a moral and social point of view. In Australia, however, the habit has not yet become nearly so general as in North America, and it is not improbable that, to some considerable extent it is checked by the want of convenient and readily intelligible means of sending home the requisite funds.

Under these circumstances, the question has been proposed whether it might not be possible to extend to Colonial correspondence the system of making payments by Post Office Orders, which has been successful in this country; and I am to request that you will bring the subject, with the foregoing statement, under the notice of the Earl of Hardwicke, and will inform me whether the suggestion appears to his Lordship one which could be entertained, and rendered fit for practical adoption. If this result could be secured Sir John Pakington believes it would be a great boon to the Colonies and to the humbler classes in this country.

I have, &c.,
(Signed) H. MERIVALE.

Lieutenant-Colonel Maberly.

General Post Office,
8th October, 1852.

Sir,—

The Postmaster-General has had under consideration your letter of the 21st ultimo, and with reference to that portion of it which relates to the proposed extension of a cheap and uniform postage to letters transmitted between the United Kingdom and the several British Colonies, I am directed by his Lordship to transmit to you, for the information of Sir John Pakington, the enclosed copy of a letter which he addressed to the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury on this subject in April last, with a copy of the reply of their Lordships; and I have to state that the Postmaster-General will be glad to know whether the measure proposed in this correspondence is such as Sir John Pakington has in view. If so, the Postmaster-General will be prepared to renew his application to the Treasury on this subject.

I have, &c.,
(Signed) S. TILLEY,
Assistant Secretary.

H. Merivale, Esq.

General Post Office,
27th April, 1852.

My Lords,—

My predecessor, in a letter dated the 9th September, 1850, brought under the consideration of your Lordships' Board, the importance of establishing uniform rates of postage upon letters, newspapers, books, and Parliamentary proceedings, transmitted either by packet or private ship between the United Kingdom and all British Colonies, and of combining in such uniform rates the total charge, Imperial and Colonial, to destination, by which means it was proposed to afford to the public the option of paying the whole of the postage (as regards letters) in advance, either in this country or in the colony, or of forwarding the letters unpaid. As a preliminary measure, letters were addressed by the Treasury to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and to the Secretary of the India Board, acquainting them with the proposition which had been made by the Postmaster-General, and requesting that the necessary information relative to the rates charged in the several Colonies and in the East Indies, on letters, &c., might be furnished. The required information has, up to the present time, been received from Heligoland, the Cape of Good Hope, Ceylon, Labuan, South Australia, Van Diemen's Land, New South Wales, St. Helena, and Sierra Leone, and although there remain several Colonies from which no reports have yet been received, there nevertheless appears sufficient information to serve as the basis of a general measure for the Crown Colonies, leaving the East Indies to be dealt with when the requisite particulars are supplied.

The information gathered from the reports made by the several Colonies confirms the impression of my predecessor, that in no other instance than that of Heligoland (which was proposed to be exempted from the arrangement in respect to the amount of its rate), the establishment of a shilling rate would raise the present total charge, while there are comparatively but few cases in which such arrangement would materially lower the charge.

The most striking of these cases is that of Ceylon, where it appears that, even by letters conveyed direct from this country by British contract packets, and consequently without any expense to the Colonial Government, a sea rate of 1s. is nevertheless added at the Colonial Post Office, which just doubles the cost to the public, thus raising a great obstacle to correspondence, and injuring the home revenue; a state of things showing the necessity for some arrangement such as that proposed by my predecessor.

There appears every reason, therefore, for carrying out the measure recommended by the Marquess of Clanricarde's letter of the 9th September, 1850, at least so far as relates to the Crown Colonies; immediate effect being given to the measure in all Colonies whose postal arrangements are under my control, and negotiations being forthwith commenced as regards the others.

The original proposition consisted in fixing the uniform rate of postage at the amount already charged in most cases, viz., 1s. the half-ounce, with the present scale of advance, the same to free the letter to its place of destination, and to be pre-paid at the option of the sender. Of this shilling it was proposed that, as in the case of Canada, 2d. should be assigned to the Colonial Post Office as its inland rate, the remaining 10d. being assigned to the British office as its inland rate and sea postage combined.

Of course to this uniform rate addition would have to be made, as at present, when the letter should be subjected to a foreign transit postage, as in the case of letters to the East Indies via Marseilles, and to Canada via the United States.

It would remain to deal with the division of the rate of letters conveyed by ships, as also with newspapers and Parliamentary Proceedings.

Where letters are conveyed by ship, the Colony is of course entitled to a larger share of Postage, and I should recommend that the 1s. rate be equally divided between the Home Government and the Colony, an arrangement somewhat more favourable to the Colonies than that which now exists.

Newspapers are conveyed at rates which vary considerably. In many cases they pass entirely free of charge; in others, a charge (generally of 1d. each) is made either in this country or in the Colony; but I am not aware of any case in which a newspaper is charged in both. In this country the rule is to charge nothing if the newspaper be carried by packet, and 1d. if by private ship. In the Colonies the practice is exceedingly variable.

The adoption of a uniform rule, therefore, implies either the imposing of a rate in those cases where newspapers go free, or the extension of free conveyance to those newspapers which are now charged, an alternative which would not only cause some loss to the revenue but would augment an inconvenience already seriously felt by this department.

Parliamentary Proceedings it is very desirable, for the sake of simplicity to place on the same footing as other books; as however this would, in many cases, involve an increase in the present rates (generally from 1d., though in a few cases from 2d. per quarter pound, to 6d. per half pound), this charge, as well as the establishment of a rate on all newspapers, would tend to produce dissatisfaction, which I fear would scarcely be allayed by the very moderate and exceptional reduction implied in the establishment of a uniform letter rate of 1s.

If, however, the interests of the revenue should be found to admit of a decided reduction in the general rate, all minor dissatisfaction would probably disappear amidst the gratification arising from so popular a measure.

Considering the vast importance of strengthening the ties between the colonies and the mother country, I am of opinion that some revenue may wisely be sacrificed, or at least risked, for the purpose of multiplying correspondence, and giving to the Colonies a valuable and acceptable privilege.

Impressed with the importance of these views, I submit for the consideration of your Lordships, without at present suggesting any change in the inter-colonial postage, the propriety of lowering the present postal charges between the mother country and the Crown colonies to a uniform rate of 6d. to be divided, as regards colonies, the ports of which are not under any control, in the same proportions as originally proposed in regard to the 1s. rate; thus giving 5d. or 3d. to the mother country, and 1d. or 3d. to the colony, according as the letter is conveyed by packet or private ship, and the course of proceeding being in all other respects the same as recommended above. With so large a reduction on letters, I should have no hesitation in recommending that Parliamentary proceedings should be placed on the same footing as other books, and that a uniform rate of 1d. (also to be paid in advance) should be established on newspapers, the same freeing them to their destination either way, and the postage being retained by whichever party collects it.

Under this combined arrangement Heligoland would of course be no longer (as formerly proposed) an exception to the general rule; and what is more important, the scale for letters would be the same (substituting ounces for pounds) as that recently adopted for books.

Supposing the rates to be thus reduced, I think a corresponding reduction should take place in the gratuities payable to the masters of private ships; and I propose that the present payment of 2d. per letter and 1d. per newspaper be reduced by one-half. I would suggest also a proportionate reduction in the allowance to the Custom House officers for letters landed at Gravesend, viz., from 1½d. to ¾d. per letter, as also the allowance to boatmen for bringing ship letters ashore in the Channel, and in any other allowance now made in respect of ship letters.

There are no exact data for ascertaining the amount of revenue which would be risked by either of the uniform rates proposed, but so far as can be judged from a rough estimate founded on the state of things in 1848, it would be £10,000 per annum in case of the 1s. rate being fixed, and above £50,000 per annum in the case of the 6d. rate being determined upon, omitting the Government postage in both cases. Judging, however, by past experience, there can be little doubt that the greater part of any deficit that might be arise, would, in a few years, be made up by an increase in the number of letters.

Considering this, and bearing in mind that the obligation to consult certain of the Colonial Legislatures, necessitates a gradual introduction of the measure, I think it probable that the loss of revenue in any one year will not exceed £20,000.

Having thus fully stated to your Lordships my views on this subject, I beg to leave it to your favourable consideration.

(Signed) I have, &c.,
HARDWICKE.

To the Right Honorab^e
The Lords Commissioners
of Her Majesty's Treasury.

Treasury Chambers,
29th May, 1852.

My Lord,—

I have laid before the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury your Lordship's letter of the 27th ultimo, recommending a reduced uniform rate of postage to the British Colonies, and am directed by their Lordships to acquaint you that my Lords do not feel warranted at present in sanctioning an arrangement for a uniform reduced rate of postage to the British Colonies, which, however desirable, would involve a considerable loss of revenue.

(Signed) I have, &c.,
GEO. A. HAMILTON.

The Postmaster-General,
&c. &c.

Downing-street,
8th November, 1852.

Sir,—

I am directed by Sir John Pakington to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 8th ultimo, in which, with reference to Mr. Merivale's letter of the 21st September, you transmit the copies of a correspondence which had already passed with the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury on the subject to which the Postmaster General's attention has since been drawn by Sir John Pakington of a cheap and uniform postage to the Colonies.

I am desired to acquaint you, for the information of the Postmaster-General, that Sir John Pakington is satisfied that the scheme proposed in the Earl of Hardwicke's letter to the Treasury, dated the 27th of April last, by which a general sixpenny rate would be established for all letters under half an ounce sent to the British Colonies, with the requisite dependent arrangement as to the transmission of Parliamentary proceedings and newspapers, would be a most valuable boon to Her Majesty's Colonial subjects, and to all in this country who have private or commercial relations with the Colonies, and that Sir John Pakington would be very glad if the Postmaster-General should be able again to bring the proposal before the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, in such a manner as may lead to its favourable consideration.

(Signed) I have, &c.,
H. MERIVALE.

S. Tilley, Esq.

General Post Office,
19th March, 1853.

Sir,—

On the 21st September last you informed the Postmaster-General that Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies had received numerous applications both from the Colonies and from this country praying that the benefit of a cheap and uniform postage might be extended to Colonial correspondence, and you stated that Sir John Pakington, concurring with the petitioners as to the advantages which would result from the concession, was favourably disposed to it, provided

the arrangement could be effected without serious difficulty. You accordingly requested to be favoured with the opinion of the Postmaster-General on this subject.

In reply, I forwarded to you on the 8th of October the copy of a letter which the Earl of Hardwicke had addressed to the Lords of the Treasury on the 27th April previous, advocating the substitution of a combined uniform charge of sixpence the single letter not exceeding half an ounce in weight in place of the present varying rates on Colonial correspondence, together with certain changes in the arrangements for the transmission of Parliamentary proceedings and newspapers between the United Kingdom and the Colonies; and the Postmaster-General had the satisfaction of learning, by your letter of the 8th of November, that in the opinion of Sir John Pakington the establishment of an uniform sixpenny rate for all Colonial letters within the weight specified, although accompanied by an increase of the rate at present levied on the transmission of Parliamentary proceedings and newspapers (as had been suggested in Lord Hardwicke's letter) would be a most valuable boon to Her Majesty's Colonial subjects, as well as to all those persons in this country having private or commercial relations with the Colonies.

No further steps were at that time taken for again bringing the question under the consideration of the Treasury. But Lord Canning, on accession to office, took an early opportunity of addressing the Treasury on the subject, expressing not only his own concurrence in the proposal of his predecessor, subject to some slight modification, but also the view entertained by Sir John Pakington, and requesting, therefore, for the measure, the favourable consideration of Her Majesty's Government.

The details of the arrangement are, that the present Postal charges on letters between the United Kingdom and all the British Colonial possessions, shall be reduced to an uniform rate of *sixpence* the half ounce, according to the following scale, which is that in operation in the United Kingdom, viz. —

Not exceeding half an ounce—one rate.

Exceeding half an ounce and not exceeding one ounce—two rates.

Exceeding one ounce and not exceeding two ounces—four rates.

And so on increasing two rates for each ounce or fraction of an ounce.

This postage to free the letter to its place of destination, and to be pre-paid or not at the option of the sender. That this postage shall be divided, as regards those Colonies the Posts of which are not under the control of Her Majesty's Postmaster-General, in the following proportions, viz.—

When the letter is conveyed by packet, 5d. to the mother country (viz., 1d. for inland rate and 4d. for sea rate), and 1d. to the Colony.

When conveyed by private ship, the postage to be equally divided, 3d. being the share of the mother country and 3d. the share of the Colony.

Of course this uniform rate of sixpence addition must be made as at present, when the letter is subjected to a foreign transit postage, as in the case of letters to Canada via the United States.

That Parliamentary proceedings shall be placed on the same footing as other books, and that an uniform rate of one penny (to be paid in advance) shall be established on newspapers, the same freeing them to their destination either way, and the postage to be retained by whichever party collects it.

The rates of postage and the regulations for the transmission of books it is unnecessary to recapitulate here, as they are fully detailed in my letter to you of the 14th December, 1850, but I may observe that under the combined arrangement proposed, the scale for letters will be the same (substituting ounces for pounds) as that adopted for books.

Lord Canning is glad to announce to the Duke of Newcastle that the Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury have informed him that they are deeply impressed with, and entirely concur in, the reasons given by his Lordship and his predecessor for the proposed change, and that they will be prepared to adopt it so soon as the circumstances which they may think it their duty to take into consideration will

permit, if, upon communication with the different Colonies whose postal arrangements are independent of this country, it shall be found that they are willing to acquiesce in the arrangement proposed.

But it is obviously necessary that the concurrence of such Colonies shall be first ascertained, the Postmaster-General, under the directions of the Treasury, has to request that the Duke of Newcastle will be good enough to communicate with those Colonies the posts of which are independent of the control of this Department, and to ascertain whether, in the event of Her Majesty's Government adopting the general system recommended, they will concur therein so far as the proposition affects their postal charges and arrangements; at the same time adding that Her Majesty's Government will be prepared to reverse the proportion of the charges in all cases where the packet service shall be furnished by the Colonies.

It is desirable that it should be explained to the Colonial Governments that the measure must either be excepted in its integrity or declined, as one of the principal objects of Her Majesty's Government is to establish an uniform measure, and this it would be impossible to accomplish if the various Colonies were to suggest modifications suited perhaps to their own peculiar state or requirements, but inconsistent with a general arrangement such as that proposed.

The following is a list of the Colonies in which the posts are under the control of Her Majesty's Postmaster-General, viz.—

British West Indies (with the exception of Barbadoes and Trinidad)
British Guiana,
Honduras,
Malta,
Gibraltar,
Hongkong,
Heligoland.

In all other British Colonies and Possessions the posts are under local management.

In order to avoid any misconception, I beg to repeat that the object of the Postmaster-General in the first instance is to inquire whether the Governments of the several Colonies will consent to the measure contemplated. Should their consent be obtained, it will then remain to fix a period for bringing the arrangements into effect simultaneously in the United Kingdom and in the Colonies.

I have, &c.,
(Signed) W. L. MABERLY.

Herman Merivale, Esq.,
&c., &c.,
Colonial Office,