

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

REPORT

ON THE

UNIVERSAL POSTAL CONGRESS OF CAIRO.

FEBRUARY-MARCH, 1934.

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REPORT.

To the Right Honorable the Prime Minister—

Pursuant to the Commission which His Excellency the Governor-General issued to us to represent Australia at the Tenth Congress of the Universal Postal Union which was held in Cairo during the months of February and March of the current year, we have the honour to submit the following report :—

1. The Congress was formally opened at 11 a.m. on Thursday, 1st February, 1934, in the Royal Opera House by His Royal Highness The Heir Apparent representing His Majesty King Fuad I. of Egypt, who was unhappily prevented through illness from attending personally to perform the ceremony. Members of the Diplomatic Corps, State Officials, former Ministers and high Egyptian dignitaries were also present.

2. Every country in the world is now a member of the Postal Union, and 89 separate countries have the right to vote at Congresses. Seventy-two of these sent delegations to Cairo, and the majority of the remainder arranged for the delegations from certain other countries to represent them. Altogether there were 166 persons attached to the delegations.

3. In all, approximately 1,600 proposals were submitted in connexion with the Congress of Cairo. The majority of these were given preliminary consideration by a Preparatory Committee which met in Ottawa in May and June, 1933, and whose report formed the basis of the discussions of Congress. The Preparatory Committee was composed of fourteen members drawn respectively from Great Britain, Canada, United States of America, Germany, Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Japan, Holland, Sweden, Switzerland, Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, and the International Postal Bureau, Berne. Representatives from Argentine Republic and Colombia attended the meetings in the capacity of Delegate Observers.

4. The first plenary sitting of the Congress was held on Friday, the 2nd February, at the Heliopolis Palace Hotel, where excellent accommodation for the purpose was provided by the Egyptian Government. After the senior member of the Congress, M. Lebon, Director of Postal Services in the French Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones, and President of the French Delegation, had addressed the assembly, Mohamed Charara Bey, Director-General of the Egyptian Post Office Department, and M. Garbani-Nerini, Director of the International Postal Bureau, were appointed President and Vice-President respectively of the Congress.

5. Regulations for the conduct of the Congress were thereupon drawn up, and four committees constituted to examine as a preliminary measure the questions on which Congress would be required to deliberate and to thus facilitate the accomplishment of its task.

6. The work allotted to each committee is set out hereunder :—

First Committee (74 Delegations)—

The Principal Convention, which covers the organization of the Postal Union, and the conditions governing postal communications in general.

Second Committee (60 Delegations)—

The Parcels Post Agreement, and the postal insurance systems.

Third Committee (34 Delegations)—

Agreements relating to Money Orders, Postal Cheques, Collection Orders, and Subscriptions to Newspapers and Periodicals.

Fourth Committee (6 Delegations)—

The drawing up of the revised text of the Convention, Regulations, Agreements and Forms in accordance with the decisions reached by the other Committees.

7. As hitherto, Australia was represented only on the First Committee which, as will be gathered from the above enumeration, was the most important. The Commonwealth is not a party to the Agreements dealt with by the Second and Third Committees and, consequently, representation thereon was not essential.

8. The membership of the First Committee, of which Brigadier-General Sir Frederic Williamson, C.B., C.B.E., Director of the Postal Services of Great Britain, was elected President, was composed of delegates coming from the following countries :—Afghanistan, Union of South

Africa, Albania, Germany, United States of America, Island Possessions of the United States of America other than the Philippine Islands, Philippine Islands, Argentine Republic, Commonwealth of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Belgian Congo, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chili, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ecuador, Spain, Whole of the Spanish Colonies, Finland, France, Algeria, Whole of the Other French Colonies, Great Britain, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, British India, Dutch Indies, Irish Free State, Italy, Whole of the Italian Colonies, Japan, Chosen, Lettonia, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Mexico, Nicaragua, Norway, New Zealand, Panama, Paraguay, Holland, Peru, Persia, Poland, Portugal, Portuguese Colonies in Africa, Roumania, Salvador, Siam, Sweden, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Tunis, Turkey, Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, Uruguay, State of the City of the Vatican, Venezuela, Yemen, Jugoslavia.

9. On the same day (2nd February) the Committees entered upon their labours. The plenary sessions of Congress were resumed on 7th March and at the final meeting, which took place on 20th March, the delegates attached their signatures to the Acts of the Congress.

10. The following is a summary of all the amendments, which call for comment, made to the Postal Union Convention of London, 1929, and its regulations. As previously stated, the Commonwealth of Australia is not a party to the other Agreements, and, consequently, it is not necessary to refer to the alterations made to those documents.

11. *Application of the Convention to Colonies, &c.*—In accordance with a proposition submitted by Great Britain, it was decided to introduce a new Article in the Convention providing that each contracting party should declare, either at the time of signing the Convention, or at a later date, the colonies, overseas territories, or territories under suzerainty or mandate to which the provisions of the Convention apply.

12. In accordance with the provisions of this new Article each of the British members of the Postal Union made the necessary declaration at the time of signing the Convention. The following were set out as the overseas territories in question so far as the Commonwealth was concerned :—

Lord Howe Island.
Nauru.
Norfolk Island
Papua.

Territory of New Guinea and other territories
in the Pacific Ocean under mandate to the
Commonwealth of Australia.

13. *Rates of Postage.*—It was unanimously agreed that, owing to the financial situation, the time was not yet opportune to bring about any general reduction in postage, and the most that could be done in that direction under existing conditions was to cheapen postage on Small Packets and on Literature for the Blind. The alterations in the basic rates for these classes of mail matter are shown hereunder :—

	Present rate.	New rate.
Small Packets	.. 15 centimes per 50 grammes, with a minimum of 50 centimes	.. 10 centimes per 50 grammes, with a minimum of 50 centimes
Literature for the blind	5 centimes per 1,000 grammes	3 centimes per 1,000 grammes

14. Under the Final Protocol to the new Convention the basic rates of postage may be advanced 40 per cent. (instead of 50 per cent. as at present) as a maximum. Consequently, the highest rates which may be charged from the date the Cairo Convention comes into force are :—

Small Packets	.. 14 centimes per 50 grammes, with a minimum of 70 centimes.
Literature for the blind	4 centimes per 1,000 grammes.

Even with the "rounding up" to suit the currency permitted by the Protocol, the existing Commonwealth rates are higher than those now prescribed, so that the decisions will involve modifications in tariff as shown hereunder :—

	Present rate.	New rate.
Small Packets	.. 2½d. per 2 oz. with a minimum of 6d.	.. 1½d. per 2 oz. with a minimum of 6d.
Literature for the Blind	1d. per 40 lb.	.. ½d. per 40 lb.

15. *Limits of size.*—Under the existing provisions, differing limits of size are prescribed for the various classes of postal articles. This has been the cause of some inconvenience to the public and it was decided to overcome the difficulty by the adoption of a uniform scale of

dimensions for all classes of postal articles, except postcards. The existing and the new limits are set out hereunder :—

	Existing Limits.	New Limits.
Letters	45 centimeters in each direction In roll form— 75 centimetres in length .. and 10 centimetres in .. diameter	In other than roll form ; length, breadth and depth combined—90 centimetres but the greatest length, 60 centimetres. In roll form : length and twice diameter 100 centimetres but great- est length, 80 centimetres.
Postcards	Maximum— 15 centimetres in length 10.5 centimetres in breadth Minimum— 10 centimetres in length 7 centimetres in breadth	Unaltered.
Commercial Papers ; Printed Matter and Literature for the Blind	45 centimetres in each direction In roll form— 75 centimetres in length, and 10 centimetres in diameter	Same as letters.
Samples of Merchan- dise and Small Pac- kets	45 centimetres in length .. 20 centimetres in breadth 10 centimetres in depth In roll form— 45 centimetres in length and 15 centimetres in diameter.	Same as letters.

16. *Insufficiently prepaid letters (unregistered).*—Letters on which the postage is unpaid or insufficiently prepaid are liable to a charge on delivery equal to double the amount of the deficiency, but the present Convention provides that the charge may not be less than 10 centimes. In certain countries this latter provision has given rise to numerous strong complaints, particularly in the case of a default in payment of very little importance ; for example, 1 centime. The majority of the delegates considered that it was reasonable to reduce the prescribed minimum charge to 5 centimes, and the provision was amended accordingly.

17. *Insufficiently prepaid letters (registered).*—It is laid down that the postage and the registration fee on all registered articles must be paid in advance. Where, however, an unpaid or insufficiently prepaid registered article is incorrectly transmitted, the present Convention provides that, on delivery, the article shall be surcharged in accordance with the rules relating to unpaid or insufficiently prepaid unregistered articles, i.e., double the deficiency, with a minimum of 10 centimes. As registered articles are handed in at a post office counter, Congress considered that insufficient prepayment would be due to a mistake on the part of a postal official, and consequently it was not equitable to penalize the addressee to the extent now prescribed. It accordingly amended the relative clause to provide that only the deficiency in postage shall be collected on delivery.

18. *Small Packets.*—Under the provisions of the Convention of London, a delivery charge not exceeding 25 centimes may be levied in respect of each Small Packet. This charge was increased—

- (a) to 75 centimes in the case of Small Packets delivered at the address of the article ;
- (b) to 50 centimes in the case of Small Packets delivered over the counter of a Post Office.

The imposition of the charge is optional on the part of the delivering Administration. It is not levied in the Commonwealth of Australia at present.

19. *Samples of Merchandise.*—Apart from the Parcels Post (to which the Principal Convention does not apply in any way) the only facilities expressly provided for the transmission of articles liable to customs duty are the Letter Post and the Small Packet Post. Hence samples of merchandise, though they may comply with the purely postal conditions prescribed for that class of mail matter, may not be sent by Sample Post, if they are liable to customs duty in the country of destination. This restriction was removed in so far as concerns packages sent to countries which are willing to accept dutiable articles per Sample Post.

20. *Express Delivery*.—The maximum fee at present chargeable, in addition to ordinary postage, for the service of express delivery, is one franc. This amount was reduced to 70 centimes. The amendment will entail a reduction of the fee charged in the Commonwealth of Australia on express delivery articles sent abroad, from 8d. to 7d. The volume of mail matter of this class sent out from Australia is very small.

21. A new provision was also inserted, making it clear that an Administration shall not be expected to attempt "express" delivery of any article more than once. If not delivered at the first attempt, the article is thereafter to be treated as an ordinary postal article as regards delivery.

22. *International Reply Coupons*.—The postage stamps of one country are not valid for the prepayment of postage in another. In order, however, that a sender of a letter may be enabled to himself pay for the postage on the reply, coupons exchangeable in any country for a stamp representing the postage on a single-rate letter originating in that country for abroad, are sold at post offices throughout the world. The maximum price at which these coupons may be sold was reduced from 37½ to 35 centimes.

23. *Inquiries*.—The maximum fee chargeable on an inquiry concerning the non-delivery of a postal article was reduced from 1 franc to 50 centimes. The fee charged in Australia (3d.) will not be affected.

24. *Compensation for loss of registered articles*.—Except when the loss is from a cause beyond control, compensation is paid to the sender of a registered article which is lost in the course of transmission. In this connexion it was deemed advisable to include in the Convention a provision making it clear that an Administration is relieved from liability for compensation in the case of registered articles which are seized by the Customs authorities because of a false declaration in regard to their contents.

25. *Transit Charges*.—The most important step taken by the Congress of Cairo was to reduce the rate of payment to intermediary countries for the use of their services for the conveyance of international mails. The old and the new scales are shown in the following table :—

	Present Scale—Per Kilogramme.		New Scale—Per Kilogramme.	
	Of letters and postcards.	Of other articles.	Of letters and postcards.	Of other articles.
	Fr. c.	Fr. c.	Fr. c.	Fr. c.
1. LAND TRANSITS.				
Up to 1,000 kilometres	0.75	0.10	0.60	0.08
Above 1,000 up to 2,000 kilometres	1.00	0.15	0.80	0.12
Above 2,000 up to 3,000 kilometres	1.50	0.20	1.20	0.16
Above 3,000 up to 6,000 kilometres	2.50	0.30	2.0	0.24
Above 6,000 up to 9,000 kilometres	3.00	0.40	2.80	0.32
Above 9,000 kilometres	4.50	0.50	3.60	0.40
2. SEA TRANSITS.				
Up to 300 nautical miles	0.75	0.10	0.60	0.08
Above 300 up to 1,500 nautical miles	2.00	0.25	1.60	0.20
Between Europe and North America	3.00	0.40	2.40	0.32
Above 1,500 up to 6,000 nautical miles	4.00	0.50	3.20	0.40
Above 6,000 nautical miles	6.00	0.75	4.80	0.60

26. It will be seen that the rates have been reduced 20 per cent. The Commonwealth of Australia strongly opposed this innovation, as the opinion is held that the existing scale of payments is a reasonable one, but there was an overwhelming majority of delegations in favour of the change, and the new scale was accordingly incorporated in the Convention. Australia, per medium of her overseas shipping service and the transcontinental railway line, renders intermediary services in connexion with a large volume of international mails, and consequently will be detrimentally affected by the change. The actual loss of revenue cannot, however, be stated at present, as the new scale will not apply until next year, and the payment for that and the next two succeeding years will be based on statistics taken in 1936.

27. Towards the close of the Congress an opportunity was taken to re-open the question of the proposed reduction in transit charges, and when it was found that Congress was definitely determined to reduce the present scale of charges, the Commonwealth of Australia urged as a compromise that a reduction of 10 per cent., instead of 20 per cent., should be adopted. This proposal, however, met with no success.

28. *A découvert correspondence*.—Correspondence for a country to which direct mails are not made up is sent in the direct mails to some other country which includes it in its own mails to the country of destination. For this service the present Convention provides a payment to the intermediary country of 5 centimes per article. The Congress of Cairo abolished this

payment, a step which was opposed by the Commonwealth on the grounds that the arrangement already in force was economical, efficient and equitable, but again the majority in its favour was very large.

29. *Warehousing of mails.*—Under the present Conventions, for the warehousing, in a port, of closed mails brought by one vessel and intended to be taken on by another, the Administration of the place where the mails are warehoused is entitled to a payment of 50 centimes per bag, provided that it does not receive payment for the land or sea transit of such mails. This payment also was abolished.

30. *Preparatory Committee.*—Previous to the Congresses of London, 1929, and Cairo, 1934, the propositions submitted by the various countries of the Union were in the first instance considered by a preparatory committee. In paragraph 3 of this report is shown the constitution and the venue of the committee which assembled previous to the Cairo Congress and whose proposals formed the basis of the discussions thereat. While the valuable work performed by these preparatory committees was recognized by all, there was a general feeling that there were drawbacks associated with the procedure, and, after due deliberation, it was unanimously decided to abandon the arrangement in connexion with future Congresses.

31. *Recommendations to the public.*—In the Regulations for the Convention there are set out certain directions which should be observed by senders in addressing and otherwise preparing articles for the post. Congress directed Administrations to recommend the following additional items to the public :—

- (a) To indicate the name and address of the sender on the front of postal articles ;
- (b) To use for postal articles of all kinds envelopes the dimensions of which are not less than 10 centimetres in length and 7 centimetres in breadth ;
- (c) To pack all postal articles securely and particularly those addressed to distant countries ;
- (d) To indicate on postal articles other than letters and post cards the postal classification to which they belong, e.g., "Commercial Papers", "Printed Matter", "Sample", "Small Packet", &c.

32. *Addressing of postal articles.*—A provision was inserted in the Regulations debarring from transmission a postal article having the whole or part of the address side-marked off into divisions for the purpose of successive addresses.

33. *Printed Matter.*—In connexion with the Printed Matter post, the following decisions were reached :—

- (a) Printed Matter (fashion journals, &c.) may contain detachable paper patterns provided such patterns are an integral part ;
- (b) Printed Matter for which substances similar to paper are used, e.g., cellophane, shall be accepted at the Printed Matter rate of postage ;
- (c) Cinematograph and photographic films, perforated sheets used for automatic musical instruments, and gramophone records shall be excluded from the Printed Matter classification.

34. Provision was made in the Regulations relating to Printed Matter—

- (1) that unsealed envelopes enclosing Printed Matter may be provided, if necessary, with metal fasteners, but such fasteners must be easy to undo and replace and they must not offer any danger to persons handling the articles ;
- (2) that packages of Printed Matter must be made up in such a way that there is no risk of their entrapping other postal articles.

35. *Air Mail Matter.*—In respect of air mail correspondence for conveyance over ordinary air mail services, the maximum fee chargeable, in addition to ordinary postage, was fixed at 15 centimes (in lieu of 25 centimes as at present) per 20 grammes per 1,000 kilometres of air conveyance. This rate and unit of weight does not, however, apply to articles conveyed by means of extraordinary services, i.e., long distance services the establishment and maintenance of which entail extraordinary expenditure.

36. Under the present provisions, insufficiently prepaid articles are transmissible by air mail, only if the charges prepaid represent at least the amount of air mail fee. The provisions as amended at Cairo give to Administrations of origin the option of sending correspondence by air if the amount prepaid represents at least 25 per cent. of the prescribed air mail fee. In these cases, surcharges are levied and collected on delivery under conditions similar to those applicable to insufficiently prepaid postal articles despatched by ordinary mail.

37. Where correspondence is forwarded by one Administration to another à découvert to be sent on by the latter by air, transit charges are payable by the Administration of origin. In determining the charges payable, the net weight of the air mail correspondence transmitted à découvert is, under the existing provisions, increased by 25 per cent. to take into account the expenditure applicable to sorting. The Congress of Cairo reduced the increase to 10 per cent. which reasonably covers the cost of the intermediary service rendered.

38. It was decided that the bags used for international air mails should be either blue in colour or should bear wide blue bands.

39. *Routine Matters*.—A number of amendments were made to the Convention and Regulations having as their object improvements in the machinery of the postal service. As these amendments relate only to procedure, design of forms, and generally to the internal routine of the post office, it seems unnecessary to do more than mention them in a general way.

40. *Proposals not adopted*.—In addition to the matters hereinbefore mentioned, numerous propositions of more or less importance were deliberated upon, but not adopted. Included in this category are the following :—

(a) *Abolition of transit charges*.—As at previous Congresses, an effort was made by certain Administrations to bring about the abolition of the charges for the transport of international mails per medium of services provided by other countries, and while the majority of the delegations was not in favour of such a step, there was overwhelming support for a reduction in the scale of charges. The total number of countries whose revenue from transit charges exceeds the expenditure incurred in the payment of such charges is relatively small when compared with the total number of countries comprising the Union, and, consequently, the number of countries which will benefit financially by the reduction in charges considerably exceeds the number which will sustain a loss. It is evident that the efforts of the proponents of free transit were largely instrumental in bringing about the reduction in charges adopted by the Cairo Congress.

(b) *Voting Powers*.—As at previous Congresses, considerable discussion took place in connexion with the arrangement under which the colonies of certain countries have separate votes in the proceedings of Congress. In some quarters the opinion is held that the grant of separate votes to Dominions and Colonies simply increases the voting power of the mother country, and the fact that an appreciable number of the colonies of certain countries have separate votes has always been a bone of contention. Certain proposals were put forward at the Congress of Cairo with the object of limiting the number of colonial votes, but these proposals did not receive the necessary support, and it was ultimately decided to leave things as they were. During the discussions, the delegation from Great Britain pointed out that while Great Britain was the largest colonial power in the world, no vote had been accorded to any of its overseas possessions other than the Dominions which were in deed and in fact entirely separate entities so far as the Postal Union was concerned. The delegation went on to indicate that Great Britain could not regard the present situation as satisfactory and that that country would be compelled to re-open the question at the next Congress. If equality of representation could not be secured in any other manner, serious consideration would have to be given to the question of supporting the movement in favour of the abolition of the votes now exercised by Crown Colonies.

41. *Date of Operation of new Convention*.—It was decided by the Congress that the new Convention would come into operation on the 1st January, 1935. The commencement of the Convention from that date is a convenient arrangement in view of certain of the provisions in regard to accounts to which periods of calendar years apply.

42. *Venue of next Congress*.—Two invitations were extended in regard to the venue of the next Congress, one by the delegation of the Argentine Republic, and the other by the delegation of Denmark. Considerable disappointment was expressed at the Congress of London by delegates from South America because of the acceptance of the invitation from Egypt for the 1934 Congress to be held in Cairo, and on the last day of the London Congress a motion was unanimously adopted that the Congress following the one at Cairo should meet in an American country. For this reason, the invitation from Denmark was not favorably regarded, and, after a brief discussion, was withdrawn by the Danish delegate. Thereupon the invitation from the Argentine Republic was unanimously accepted, and it was decided that the next Congress would meet at Buenos Aires during 1939, on a date to be determined later.

43. Attached hereto is a copy of the new Convention and Regulations.

We have the honour to be

Your Excellency's most obedient Servants,

(Sgd.) ARCHDALE PARKHILL,

(Sgd.) M. B. HARRY.

Melbourne, 12th June, 1934.