

No. 11.—*Circular from Lord Knutsford on the Subject of the Vienna Congress of 1891.* (Laid before the Conference by the Hon. D. O'Connor.)

SIR,—

Downing Street, 25th November, 1890.

I have the honour to transmit to you a copy of a letter from the General Post Office (17th November, 1890), stating that the next Postal Congress is to be held at Vienna on the 20th of May, 1891, and that the Austrian Government have invited your Government, amongst others, to send a delegate to the Congress.

I have to request that you will inform me whether your Government accepts the invitation, and in that case by whom it will be represented, and that you will furnish me with the full names and designation of the delegate.

I have, &c.,

The Officer Administering the Government of.

KNUTSFORD.

SIR,—

General Post Office, London, 17th November, 1890.

I am directed by the Postmaster-General to acquaint you, for the information of Lord Knutsford, that the next Postal Congress is to be held at Vienna on the 20th of May, 1891, in conformity with the provisions of the Union Convention, and that the Austrian Government, through their Minister in London, have invited Her Majesty's Government to send delegates to represent this country at the Congress.

The invitation is extended to the Government of Canada, which ranks as a separate State belonging to the Union, and also to the Governments of the Australasian Colonies, the Fiji Islands, the Cape of Good Hope, Natal, St. Helena, the Transvaal, and the Orange Free State, none of which at present are members of the Union, but whose interests are concerned, inasmuch as the question of the entry of most of them into the Union has been long under consideration.

The Postmaster-General requests that you will be so good as to move the Secretary of State for the Colonies to take the necessary steps for communicating the invitations to the several colonial Governments concerned.

I am to add that the same reasons exist now as in 1885 for the representation of the Australasian and South African Colonies at the Congress. Now, as then, although the representatives could not, of course, vote upon any of the questions discussed, they would, if present at the discussions, be able to afford the Congress the most satisfactory information as to the conditions upon which these important colonies would be prepared to adhere to the Postal Union.

I am to mention that the deliberations of the Congress of Vienna, like those of the Congress of Lisbon, will be conducted wholly in the French language.

I am, &c.,

The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies.

S. A. BLACKWOOD.

No. 12.—*Report of the Representative of New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia, at the Lisbon Congress of the Universal Postal Union.* (Laid before the Congress by the Hon. D. O'Connor.)

SIR,—

London, 19th May, 1885.

In pursuance of instructions which I received from you before proceeding to Lisbon as one of the British delegates to the recent Postal Union Congress, I acted as representative of the Colonies of New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia. Victoria and Tasmania were represented by Mr. Cameron Corbett, and Queensland by Mr. Garrick and Mr. Hemmant, New Zealand being unrepresented. These gentlemen and myself arranged to act in concert; and we availed ourselves of an opportunity which Mr. Blackwood, as President of the first committee (dealing with the main Convention of the Union), obtained for us to get an early hearing, in order that the representatives of Victoria and Queensland might not be unnecessarily detained at Lisbon. The proceedings of the committee are detailed in the accompanying report, printed at Lisbon.

At the request of my colleagues, I included Victoria, Queensland, and Tasmania in a statement which I made to the first committee on the 5th of February, in support of the demand made by the colonies in applying for admission to the Union.

That demand, as you are aware, was—

(1.) That the rates of payment for sea transit and the surtaxes fixed by the Convention of Paris should not be reduced, at all events until after the next quinquennial Congress, to that of Lisbon; and

(2.) That each colony shall have a separate voice in the affairs of the Union.

The first of these conditions met with no great opposition, but the second was received with energetic protests from several delegates; and the committee, unable to come at once to a decision, appointed a sub-committee to endeavour to come to an understanding with the colonial representatives. The delegations named to form the sub-committee were those of Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Great Britain, Italy, the United States of America, and Russia.

Neither the representatives of Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, nor myself had any authority to arrange a compromise, and I was consequently obliged to adopt a very unyielding attitude towards the sub-committee. Eventually they voted unanimously in favour of the maintenance of the *status quo*, as regards transit rates and surtaxes, negatived by six votes to one (that of Great Britain) the proposal to give to each Australian Colony a separate voice, and decided by six votes to one to award to all Australia one collective voice on entry into the Union. It was with evident and genuine reluctance that this one voice was conceded, notwithstanding the anxiety of the Union generally that the Australian Colonies should join; and when the recommendations of the sub-committee were laid before Committee No. 1, on the 7th February, the same feeling was to be discerned. Nevertheless, there was a frank and generous recognition of the peculiar position occupied by the Australian Colonies among modern communities, and also of the fact that a concession was necessary and proper, the only question being as to the amount of the concession; and the committee decided to adopt the recommendation of the sub-committee.