

No. 47.—*Postal Union (Sea Transit Rates).*

In September last the great inequality of the rates of payment for the sea transit of mails for Postal Union countries was brought under notice by the Sydney Post Office, special attention being drawn to the case of mails for New Caledonia, as follows :—

Under Article 4 of the Vienna Convention, the French Post Office claims from this office for the conveyance of mails by French mail vessels from Sydney to New Caledonia, a distance of 1060 miles, the rates of 15 francs per kilogramme of letters or postcards, and 1 franc per kilogramme of other articles, the same rates as would be charged from Adelaide to Marseilles, a distance of 9240 miles; whilst on mails from France to New Caledonia, conveyed from Italy to Adelaide by P & O. and Orient vessels, and from Sydney to New Caledonia by non-contract packets, at a cost to this office of 2s. per lb. of letters or postcards, and 4s. 6d. per cwt. of other articles, this office is allowed for the latter service 1 franc 57 centimes per kilogramme (7d. per lb.) of letters or postcards, and 10 centimes per kilogramme ($\frac{1}{4}$ d. per lb., or 4s. 3d. per cwt.) of other articles. In other words, France claims for the conveyance of New South Wales mail matter from Sydney to New Caledonia about ten times the rates allowed to New South Wales for the conveyance of French mails between the same places.

In the case of other mails, also, great inequalities exist. The stipulations in the Postal Convention were made before the Australasian Colonies joined the Postal Union, and their operation in this way may not have been foreseen, but it appeared to be imperative that these Colonies should press for a more equitable arrangement.

The Adelaide Office was therefore asked by New South Wales (26 September, 1894) to communicate with the other Colonies and obtain their assent to submitting the following proposals to the Berne Bureau (in terms of Article 26 of the Convention) for the consideration of Postal Union countries; viz.—

That in lieu of Subsection 2° 3§ of Article 4 of the Vienna Principal Convention, the following be substituted; viz.—

For sea transits :—		Letters or Postcards.	Other articles.	} per kilogramme.
Not exceeding 2500 miles.	..	3 francs	20 centimes	
Between 2500 and 5000 miles	..	6 "	40 "	
" 5000 and 7500 "		9 "	60 "	
" 7500 and 10,000 "	..	12 "	80 "	
Over 10,000 miles	..	15 "	1 franc	

That subsections 2° and 4° of §4 of Article 4 be suppressed

That the necessary amendments be made in Article 5 §2 subsection 1, Article 17 §4 subsection (a) and §5, and §4 of detailed regulations 24 and 25, respectively, in order to bring same into conformity with the changes proposed."

The matter was referred accordingly to the other Colonies, and the following is an extract from the New Zealand reply :—

"This Office quite recognises that the case under review presents probably one of the greatest anomalies possible in the application of the long distance sea rates re-enacted by the Vienna Convention, and fully concurs with you that it should be brought under the special notice of the Union Administrations. In my opinion, however, the object sought would be more readily obtained if no definite rates were proposed. Those suggested by New South Wales would traverse the huge Atlantic and European interests created in and before 1878, compared to which the few hundred pounds involved by the Sydney-New Caledonia question sink into insignificance, and while standing but a remote chance of being accepted, they might aid in compromising Great Britain in connection with the growing agitation for the total abolition of sea rates.

"It is considered not unlikely, however, that the part of the proposal made by Austria-Hungary at the Vienna Conference, but postponed for discussion at Washington, which would fix the sea rates from 300 to 4000 miles at 5 frs. and 50 cts. for letters and other articles respectively, may commend itself to a majority of the Union Administrations, and, if so, Sydney's difficulty would be effectually met, as its payments to France would be reduced to one-third the present rates."

We recommend that the matter should be brought before the Berne Bureau and London Office, and that the Australasian Delegate at the next Quinquennial Congress be asked to press for an alteration in Sea Transit Rates.

No. 51.—*Consideration of proposed Official Code Vocabulary*

There seems to be a misapprehension on this subject. The proposed code was not prepared by the Eastern Extension or any Company, but by the Berne Bureau, by direction of the Paris Convention of 1890. It is not intended to come into operation as regards extra-European countries (of which Australasia is one) until it has been confirmed at the next Telegraph Conference in 1896. We are of opinion that it is very desirable to have a carefully prepared code vocabulary, as many of the present private codes contain inconvenient words, and words so nearly alike as to lead to frequent repetitions through an error possibly of a single letter. Not having seen the vocabulary to which objection is taken, we are unable to form an opinion as to its suitability.

No. 52.—*Registration of Code or abbreviated Addresses (Uniformity of Regulations).*

The Wellington Office telegraphed to the Postmaster-General, South Australia, that "in England a separate charge is made for each registration at office of delivery. South Australia and Victoria appear to accept registration for the whole of Colony, charging only one fee. The question is—What rule is observed in other Colonies, as uniformity is desirable?"