

The papers which have been laid before Parliament show the position of the Pacific cable scheme, which, owing to the apparent determination of the Imperial Government to favour a cable by way of South Africa, is scarcely in such a hopeful position as could be desired. But in the discussion on the question at the late Hobart Conference views were strongly expressed in favour of the Pacific cable as against the proposed line to Western Australia by way of the Cape of Good Hope; and it was resolved, "That this Conference reaffirms the opinion that, in the interests of Australasia, the Pacific cable project should be consummated as speedily as practicable, and that the Governments of the various Australasian Colonies be requested to represent to the Imperial and Dominion Governments the foregoing opinion, together with the proposal of the Premiers as agreed to at their recent Conference held in Melbourne: viz., 'That if Great Britain and Canada would each contribute one-third of the cost the colonies would be prepared to contribute the remaining third.'"

Government is fully in accord with the resolution, and action has already been taken to forward it, besides otherwise keeping the question before the notice of the countries specially interested in the project.

Among other matters the Conference recommended the ratification of the treaty entered into at Washington by the Hon. John Gavan Duffy, the colonies' representative, and passed a resolution of appreciation of Mr. Duffy's services.

A large number of departmental matters was also dealt with and reported upon, as will be seen by the printed report of the Conference proceedings.

The new postage-stamps, which were in course of manufacture for some time previous, were brought into use on the 5th April last. As the initial supply (printed in London by Messrs. Waterlow and Sons (Limited) was restricted, the entire withdrawal of the old issue will not take place until the special machinery, which has been ordered, is received by the Government Printer, and the printing of the stamps in the colony is in full operation.

Beyond some adverse criticism of the colours selected in London for several of the values, there has been little else but praise for the new issue, which, in respect to design and printing, will take a very high rank among the postage-stamps of the world.

An error was unfortunately made in engraving the plate for the twopence-halfpenny stamp, "Wakaitipu" being misspelt "Wakitipu"; but this has since been corrected. The keen demand by collectors for the "error" somewhat embarrassed the department in the sale of these labels for their legitimate purpose, necessitating a minimum quantity only being sold to any one applicant. Through a misunderstanding in London the design intended for the fourpenny stamp was adopted for the penny stamp, involving a costly process of double printing for the denomination more largely used than any of the others. Instructions have already been given to rectify this as early as possible. Another matter of considerable importance is that future issues are to be printed on watermarked paper. The colours of several of the stamps will be changed to brighter tints so soon as the printing is done in the colony. In the meantime the transposition of the designs for the penny and fourpenny labels will carry with it changes in colour as follow: One penny from brown and blue to lilac, fourpence from rose-lake to brown and blue, and ninepence from lilac to rose-lake.

The following is a detailed description of the new stamps:—

*One Halfpenny (Lilac-brown).*—View of Mount Cook, in oval frame on shaded background, surmounted by curved inscription in white letters, "Postage and Revenue," and at top by label with ornamental border containing "New Zealand" in coloured letters on white ground. Central design is flanked by sprays of ranunculus and celmisia, below which on each side are small oval labels surrounded by scrolls, and bearing figures of value on white ground, the value in words being in straight label at foot.

*One Penny (Light-brown, with Blue Centre).*—View of Lake Taupo, with Ruapehu in background, and cabbage-palm in left foreground, surrounded by semicircular labels containing "New Zealand" in white letters on colour above, and "Postage and Revenue" in coloured letters below. Value in words in straight label at foot, broken at each lower corner by square containing figure of value. Ornamented spandrels.

*Twopence (Wine-red or Claret).*—View of Pembroke Peak, Milford Sound, surrounded by oval band with inscription in white, "New Zealand Postage and Revenue." Figure of value at base of design, with ornaments on each side. Value in words at foot, in straight label, full width of stamp. Sides and top of stamp are enclosed by dotted border of Greek design, and ornamented spandrels.

*Twopence-halfpenny (Antwerp Blue).*—Oblong (horizontal). View of Mount Earnslaw and head of Lake Wakaitipu, with *Phormium tenax*, toitoi, and cabbage-palms in foreground. Inscription, "New Zealand" in white, "Postage and Revenue" in colour, at top of stamp. Value in figures only, enclosed in scroll ornament springing from lower right-hand corner, and bearing name of locality (misspelt "Wakitipu"). Name "Mt. Earnslaw" in left-hand lower corner.

*Threepence (Light-brown).*—Central design, a pair of huias on branch, surrounded by a circular border, inscribed "New Zealand Postage and Revenue" in white letters on colour, and broken at lower corners by Egyptian ornamentation. Value in words at bottom, divided in centre by shield of solid colour, with figure "3" in white. Upper spandrels are filled in with similar labels, bearing figures of value placed obliquely.

*Fourpence (Rose-lake).*—View of White Terrace, Rotomahana, in oval dotted border, flanked by sprays of tataramoa, and broken at base on each side by bands containing inscription, "Postage," "Revenue." Name of colony at top of stamp, and value in words at foot, in straight labels.

*Fivepence (Brown-lake).*—Oblong (vertical). View of Otira Gorge, with snow-peak in background. Name in lower right-hand corner; also small circular view of Mount Ruapehu superimposed upon left foreground. Inscription, "New Zealand Postage and Revenue" at top of stamp, and value in words at base, in straight label.