

9th Day.]

UNIVERSAL PENNY POSTAGE.

[15 June, 1911.]

Sir JOSEPH WARD—*cont.*

The question of revenue and expenditure is a point we must consider, and I know the financial side has to be considered by the British Government, as I recognise must be the case in regard to all these matters; but the point I want to impress upon the Conference is that under the Postal Union any of those great countries that have not penny postage between them may enter into an agreement to have it established as between themselves without waiting for another Postal Conference to sit to have it made general. Already since that Postal Conference took place in Rome in 1907, we find the United Kingdom and the United States of America have by agreement (the power to agree having been conferred upon them under the Postal Union Rules) entered into the system of penny postage as between those two countries; already Germany has by agreement with the United States of America arranged to have penny postage; and the time is not very far distant when France will do the same with the United States of America. As a matter of fact, the people who are carrying on their important affairs in those countries who are standing outside the penny postal system, for the mere sake of getting their business arrangements carried out on grounds similar to the great competitive countries, will demand it against the will of those who may regard it from a financial standpoint as not being desirable to do it, and will certainly bring those countries by agreement into a system of penny postage. We have already, as Mr. Harcourt knows, and as the Postmaster-General knows, entered into an agreement with France as far as New Zealand is concerned for the establishment of the system of penny postage. So the whole movement of the independent countries is in the direction of bringing about universal penny postage. Then why should not we, as a Conference, with men from all portions of the Empire represented here, take time by the forelock, and why should we wait to be drawn by the chariot wheels of the independent countries who are going to establish this system as between themselves, and why should not we have—I will not say the courage—but why should not we accept the practical working of the great countries which have established penny postage already and have proved it to be on a sound financial basis, which proves conclusively that within two and a half years the whole of the loss of revenue as the outcome of the greater usage of the Post Office by the increase of letters posted has been made up. These facts cannot be contradicted so far as those countries are concerned.

Mr. SAMUEL: There is no penny postage between France and New Zealand.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: They have agreed to accept our letters at the penny rate from New Zealand to France. That shows they are a very sensible people and recognise the possible advantage of it, and I should think it is going to be the precursor to their establishing it with England. My opinion is that France cannot long remain behind Germany in that all-important question of penny postage, and they will before long be in agreement with America; and there will be the anomaly of letters passing through Italy and France from New Zealand, and from here through Italy and France to New Zealand for 1d. while 2½d. is still being charged between this country and France, which will by degrees affect public opinion in those countries, and I hope before long to see them in the van of progress.

I should like Mr. Samuel, in order to add to the splendid coping-stone he has already laid in the way of reforms in the Post Office of the Old Country, to agree to this Resolution that universal penny postage should be put into operation as soon as practicable. I do not believe that the fact of our carrying a resolution of this kind should make it any less or more difficult to arrange from time to time to have this world-wide system established, which I believe would be of enormous advantage to all parts of the Empire and to the world at large.

CHAIRMAN: Perhaps the Conference would like to hear Mr. Samuel at once on the subject.

Mr. SAMUEL: As this Resolution relates specially to the Government of the United Kingdom, perhaps I may be allowed to say a few words upon it. I