

POST AND TELEGRAPH AMENDMENT ACT, 1924.

The Post and Telegraph Act was amended in 1924.

It is made an offence for any person to defraud the revenue by means of improper use of telephones.

Paragraph (e), subsection (1), of section 87 of the principal Act, which provides that every person is liable to a fine not exceeding £50 who is concerned in any fraudulent act, contrivance, or device, whatsoever, for which no specific penalty is provided, with intent to defraud His Majesty of any of the rates or duties under the Act, is made to apply to the telegraph side as well as the postal side of the service.

The powers conferred upon the Governor-General by section 133 of the principal Act to make regulations are widened to include the power to make regulations regarding the inspection of telegrams by authorized persons.

Provision is made for the licensing of dealers in wireless apparatus, and for a portion of the license fees received to be applied in assistance of broadcasting agencies. Provision is made also for persons or companies authorized to maintain broadcasting service to be deemed, for the purposes of the law relating to patents, agents of the Post and Telegraph Department.

The amount at credit of a deceased depositor in the Post Office Savings-bank which the Postmaster-General may pay without requiring probate or letters of administration is increased from £100 to £200.

POSTAL UNION CONGRESS AT STOCKHOLM, 1924.

The Eighth Postal Union Congress assembled at Stockholm on the 4th July, 1924. The Stockholm Congress marked the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the Postal Union.

With the exception of Austria and five small Latin-American States, all countries of the Union were represented. The Congress was attended by 180 delegates and attaches, New Zealand being represented by the Secretary of the Department, Mr. A. T. Markman.

The Congress, which was held in the Parliament Buildings, Stockholm, was formally opened by Their Majesties the King and Queen of Sweden.

The deliberations of the Congress extended over nearly two months, the final sitting, at which the authorized conventions and arrangements were signed by the delegates of the Union countries, being held on the 28th August. Notwithstanding the fact that only four years had elapsed since the Madrid Congress, the agenda paper was a very lengthy one. During the period that Congress sat there were held twenty-five sittings of the First Committee (Principal Convention), thirteen sittings of the Second Committee (Postal Parcels and Insured Articles), seven sittings of the Third Committee (Money-orders, Collection Orders, Newspaper Subscriptions, and Postal Cheque System), and ten sittings of the Fourth Committee (Committee for the Revision and Preparation of Texts adopted by other Committees). In addition, two sub-committees dealt respectively with the cash-on-delivery system and with the standardization of forms, and revision of the regulations so far as they concerned the make-up and exchange of mails.

Attempts had been made at each Congress to deprive the British Dominions of the right to vote individually, or to restrict their voting-power. It was claimed in some quarters that the Dominions voted always with Great Britain, and that to accord them the right to vote would simply increase the voting-power of Great Britain. For many years the right of Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, and South Africa to vote was given by a special clause in the Convention, but this clause was always subject to attack. The Dominions considered that they, as Sovereign States, parties to the Convention and absolutely independent Postal Administrations, were entitled in this connection to be placed beyond attack. A proposal to treat British India and the Dominions of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa as metropolitan countries as regards their status in the Union was carried without objection. Congress also granted without opposition a separate vote to the Irish Free State; but the request of the Soviet's delegates that the Union of Soviet Republics be granted four votes instead of one vote was rejected.

The Madrid (1920) Congress decided that the basis of the settlement of transit accounts would be theoretical gold francs. The Stockholm Congress defined the gold franc as weighing $\frac{1}{31}$ of a gramme of gold with a fineness of .9.

Certain countries desired to see postage-rates reduced while others pressed for an increase. It was eventually decided to adopt as a minimum a reduction of 20 per cent. on the rates which existed under the Rome (1906) Convention, and as a maximum an increase of 60 per cent. on those rates. The rates agreed upon at Rome were: Letters, 25 centimes (2½d.) for the first 20 grammes or 1 oz., 15 centimes (1½d.) for each succeeding 20 grammes or 1 oz.; post-cards, 15 centimes (1½d.); printed papers, commercial papers, and samples, 5 centimes (½d.) per 50 grammes (2 oz.), with a minimum of 25 centimes (2½d.) for commercial papers and 10 centimes (1d.) for samples.

The minimum surcharge to be collected on unpaid and insufficiently prepaid correspondence was reduced from 30 centimes (3d.) to 10 centimes (1d.). The maximum registration fee and the fee for an advice of delivery of a registered article were fixed at 40 centimes (4d.); but countries which are unable to fix the registration fee as low as 40 centimes (4d.) are permitted to adopt a fee not exceeding 50 centimes (5d.).

It is now laid down that a letter must not contain any indication, note, or document addressed to a person other than the addressee of the letter.

In the international service, letters and post-cards unpaid or insufficiently prepaid will, as heretofore, be accepted, but the postage on reply post-cards, printed papers, commercial papers, samples, and literature for the blind must be fully prepaid.

The maximum size of post-cards and the maximum length of samples were increased.