

Dr. Featherston at once sent the Bill to us for our consideration, and we prepared observations upon it for the consideration of himself and the other Agents-General, to be discussed at the meeting which it was arranged they should have upon the subject.

We also communicated with the Solicitors of the Bank of England, to whom we found a print of the Bill had been sent, asking them to let us have their observations upon the Bill to submit to the proposed meeting.

The meeting of the Agents-General, which was delayed in consequence of the death of Dr. Featherston, took place at the office of the Government of Victoria on the 23rd June, when, besides Mr. Michie, the Agent-General for that Colony, there were present yourself; Mr. Forster, the Agent-General for New South Wales, accompanied by Mr. Larnach of the New South Wales Bank; Sir John Rose, on behalf of Canada; and Mr. Hamilton, Secretary of the department of Agent-General for Queensland.

The Bill was then considered, together with the observations which we had made upon it, and also the observations which had been made by the Counsel for the Bank of England; and instructions were given to us to have the Bill settled by Mr. Reilly on behalf of the colonies, so as to carry out the views expressed at the meeting, and also to prepare and have settled by him a letter to be written to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with the amendments desired in the Bill.

Mr. Dutton, the Agent-General for South Australia, was absent from London at the time of the meeting; but on his return he assented to and concurred in what had been done. We accordingly settled with Mr. Reilly the amendments which it was desired should be made in the Bill, and the letter to be written to Lord Carnarvon; and on the 27th June, this letter, signed by yourself and the Agents-General for Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia, was handed to Mr. Herbert, at the Colonial Office. Sir John Rose, on behalf of Canada, afterwards communicated to Lord Carnarvon his entire approval of the proposed amendments. We afterwards learned that the letter to the Colonial Secretary, with the amendments, had been forwarded to the Treasury, and that they had conferred with their Counsel upon the matter. On the 8th July, we attended him, and, after discussing the amendments with him, suggested that there should be a meeting between himself and Mr. Reilly to endeavour to settle the Bill. On the 10th, we received a letter from him that he was authorized to have a conference with Mr. Reilly, which took place on the following day.

The amendments desired in the Bill, with reference to stamp duties, had been referred to the consideration of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue.

The discussion at the conference, therefore, was limited to the other portions of the Bill; and it was suggested that we should communicate with the Commissioners of Inland Revenue as to the stamp clauses.

The amendments in what may be called the regulation clauses of the Bill were agreed to, except on three points, as to which it was arranged that we should communicate with the Bank of England, and see how far they might be disposed to waive their objections and meet the views of the Government.

On the following day, we attended at Somerset House, and found that the Commissioners of Inland Revenue had reported to the Treasury upon the desired amendments in the stamp clauses, conceding what had been desired excepting on two points—the first as to allowing a rebate upon the composition in respect of loans issued on debentures on which the stamp had already been paid, and as to the stamp on stock certificates.

After a long discussion, the Chairman declined to concede the rebate desired, as he considered it would be contrary to the policy of the Government with reference to compositions; but he promised that the Board should reconsider the question of the stamp on stock certificates, which they had desired to make liable to a duty of 7s. 6d., if no composition had been paid, with a view to reduce it to 2s. 6d.

We had communicated to Messrs. Freshfield the result of the conference between Mr. Reilly and Mr. Jenkyns; and on the 14th July we had a long conference with them, and afterwards attended at the meeting at the Bank of England, when it appeared that, unless the Bank could have the same protection afforded to them in keeping the register of colonial stocks which they had in respect of the National Debt, the Metropolitan Board of Works Stocks, and the East India Stock, they would, as then advised, be unwilling to keep the register of Colonial Stocks. We then saw Mr. Welby, at the Treasury, and explained to him the views of the Bank of England, and he promised that the matter should be considered; and that if the Treasury adhered to their present views, he would endeavour to arrange an interview for Mr. Freshfield and ourselves with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Mr. Smith.

Not hearing further on the matter, on the 17th we saw Mr. Jenkyns, and found that no decision had been received from the Commissioners of Inland Revenue upon the stamp clauses; and we then discussed with him some further amendments in the Bill, and he proposed some modifications in the clauses objected to, which he thought might meet the objections of the Bank of England.

We again attended the Commissioners of Inland Revenue, and found that they had made a report to the Treasury, conceding all that had been desired with reference to stamps, except the allowance of the rebate of 2s. 6d.

We communicated with the Bank of England with reference to the proposed amendments, and on the following day wrote to Mr. Jenkyns, explaining their views upon the matter.

On the 19th, we had a conference with Mr. Welby, at the Treasury, and found that all difficulties in the Bill appeared to have been removed, except as to the clause allowing the inspection of the register, to which the Bank of England so strongly objected; and it was arranged that he should go through the Bill with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Mr. Smith, and if they saw no objection to waiving this clause, the matter might be considered as arranged, but if not, he undertook to arrange for Mr. Freshfield and our Mr. Mackrell to have an interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Mr. Smith.

On the 24th, we received a telegram from Mr. Welby, inviting Mr. Freshfield and ourselves to attend Mr. Smith at the Treasury; but in consequence of Mr. Freshfield's absence from London, he was unable to attend with us.