

## No. 50.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Wellington.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 29th August, 1878.

In continuation of other letters\* which I have written to you on the subject of the proposed change in the payment of postages collected here on account of the Australasian mails, I have the honor to inform you that, subsequent to my letter of the 14th August, Mr. Forster, the Agent-General for New South Wales, received instructions from his Government to take action here in the matter, and to co-operate with me. In consequence of these instructions he addressed to the Secretary of State a letter, copy of which is enclosed. Mr. Forster received in reply an invitation to an interview with Sir Michael Hicks Beach. At Mr. Forster's request I accompanied him to this interview, as did also the Secretary of the New South Wales Agency, Captain Jopp.

Mr. Forster explained at some length why he had not previously accompanied the other Agents-General. His explanation was to the same effect as his letters in the correspondence enclosed. He did not consider there was reason for immediate action; he thought it best that instructions should reach him from his Government after they had received the papers from the Colonial Office. He did not look upon it that those papers indicated a decision on the part of the Imperial Government; he regarded them more as an invitation to the colonies to express an opinion. He proceeded to consider the general question, and protested against the proposed alteration. He thought the proposal inconsistent with previous Imperial policy, and calculated to create a breach with the colonies, as displaying a disposition on the part of the mother-country to throw them on their own resources, and not to bear a fair share of the cost of maintaining communication with them. He further urged that, though because of the present contract to Galle providing for the carriage of all mails, including the Australian mails, the San Francisco mails which had to be paid for according to weight might seem to be placed on a worse footing than the mails by way of Galle, he yet considered they should be maintained on one and the same footing.

Sir Michael Hicks Beach, in reply, said he admitted the Treasury had not given sufficient reasons for the proposed change, and that he had referred to the Treasury, for further consideration, the letters he had received from Sir A. Michie and from me, and would do the same with Mr. Forster's letter. The Treasury officers, too, had heard the representations which had been made to him by the Agents-General at the previous interview. He was of opinion the matter demanded further consideration. I asked Sir Michael Hicks Beach were we at liberty to intimate to our Governments that he was favorable to the question being reconsidered. He said, "Yes, certainly," we might state so, and he further implied his opinion that the question was merely one of the colonies not throwing upon the mother-country an unfair amount of the burden of postal communication between them.

I then explained the circumstances under which I was present at the interview: I mentioned that a telegram received by Sir Archibald Michie seemed to show that a conference of representatives of various colonies had been held at Melbourne to consider the subject, and that, judging by the telegram received, the matter had created very much interest in the colonies. I again urged that this was probably not on account so much of the amount at stake as because of the arbitrary nature of the change. I quite concurred in the principle of a fair division, but I showed that whilst the colonies, for the mail services and coastal deliveries, paid about £200,000, the postage which they received from all sources under the present arrangement must leave them a considerable loss, which, as far as I could estimate, amounted to about £80,000 a year, whilst the Imperial Government were in a much better position. I mentioned also that, in my opinion, the San Francisco service had the stronger case, because, since the arrangement of 1873 was made, the cost of the Atlantic service was reduced one-half. The fact that the mode of charge was by weight instead of by bulk seemed to me of no importance, as of course every one was aware the carriage of the mails to New York or Singapore represented a valuable consideration. Captain Jopp made some remarks upon the relative burden of the cost of the services to the mother-country and the colonies. I pressed very strongly for an early decision, and said there was no need to wait for communications from the colonies, as all the Governments had placed the matter in the hands of the Agents-General. I asked, as the question affected other departments than the Colonial Office, if it would not be well that we should see the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Postmaster-General. Sir Michael Hicks Beach said he thought it would be desirable that we should do so, as soon as they returned to town. They would be away for a time for the autumn recess.

Subsequent to the interview I forwarded to you a telegram, copy appended.†

I have, &c.,

JULIUS VOGEL,  
Agent-General.

The Hon. the Postmaster-General, Wellington.

## Enclosure in No. 50.

The AGENT-GENERAL for NEW SOUTH WALES to the SECRETARY of STATE for the COLONIES.

SIR,—

3, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, S.W., 12th August, 1878.

Pursuant to instructions, in terms of the telegram from the Government of New South Wales, dated Sydney, 7th instant, of which a copy is appended hereto,‡ and with special reference to Mr. Herbert's letter§ of the 5th ultimo, transmitting for my information a copy of a circular despatch, with enclosures, which you had addressed to the Governors of the Australasian Colonies with reference to certain proposed changes in the division between the Imperial and Colonial Post Offices of the postages on correspondence between the Australasian Colonies and this country, I have the honor,

\* *Vide* F.-4A., 1878, Nos. 24 and 26.

† *Vide* F.-4A., 1878, No. 23.

‡ *Vide* No. 18.

§ *Vide* Enclosure 1 in No. 24, F.-4A., 1878.