

told them that after all the great expense about letters was not the actual sending, but the handling of them, providing for their proper reception in the Post Office, and delivery out of the Post Office; and he believed, if they took proper precautions as regards intercolonial mail traffic—and as most, or a great deal of the traffic in Australia was done by the railways, and the railways belonged to the Government, and the Government therefore paid nothing for the carriage of its mails over the lines, it was not the same as if they had to employ private railway lines—if they took the proper precautions about letters that went by ship, to see that they were secured by law, they could be carried at a reasonable rate. He understood the masters of ships were obliged to take letters at a penny per letter; that was a high sum, and it could no doubt be fixed lower, so as to pay the shipowners properly for their trouble. If that were done, and considering that the railways are Government property, and practically there was no—or little extra—expense in carrying mails, he believed the main cost of their postage systems was, as he had said, not in conveying the letters from place to place, but in putting them into the bags, registering, marking for conveyance, and delivering them at destination when they got there. Some of the colonies now found themselves able to pay their way, or to exist with a reasonable amount of loss—as Post Offices had to do; but in some cases actually paid their way, as he believed the Post Office in South Australia did. [Mr. Todd was understood to say that the postal branch alone did not, though the telegraph did.] Well, he understood the department paid as a whole, as did also that of New Zealand, and if they could be made to pay in those colonies, perhaps they could also be made to pay in the others. As regards Victoria, much inconvenience was caused by the public not understanding—perhaps Victorians were naturally stupid—that, though a letter could go from Melbourne to Wodonga for 1d., it must be charged 2d. to go to Moama, about half the distance; and they would insist on putting penny stamps on letters to New South Wales, South Australia, &c. He had seen in their post office, in one mail, a whole pile of letters every one of which bore the fatal “T,” showing it was taxed. A letter could be delivered away at the back blocks on the Wimmera for 1d. or sent into the wilds of Gippsland for 1d., but could not be sent to Sydney for less than twice that amount, although the postal officials as well as the public knew that the expense of carrying a letter to the back blocks was four or five times as much as carrying it between Sydney and Melbourne, or from Melbourne to Adelaide. He believed that if the Conference now adopted a universal rate of 1d. per ½oz.—if in advance of the grand federation they adopted that postal federation, so that a letter posted in any part of Australia bearing a penny stamp would be delivered in any other part—they would be doing something to benefit the colonies as a whole, and that, moreover, would not trench much upon the revenues of the Government interested. Of course, he might lay himself open to the charge of selfishness, as the sacrifice would be felt less by Victoria than by other colonies, as they had already established the penny rate. But Victoria had in other matters done enough to show her public interest in postal and telegraphic matter, so he could afford to be thought selfish in this. He was glad to hear that the President of the Conference (Mr. O'Connor) had done his best to establish the penny postage in New South Wales, that the Bill had reached the second reading when it was thrown out. When the penny rate was established here it would be only a short time before it would be extended to Victoria and the other colonies. He trusted the Conference would see its way to pass the resolution.

Sir John Bray was glad the proposal had been brought under notice, though perhaps they might not all agree to it. It was impossible for his colony to go in for an intercolonial rate of 1d., while they had only a twopenny rate in their own territory. In the course of a few years, no doubt, the proposal would be carried, but at present a great loss would be caused to South Australia if it were adopted. Most of the colonies, he supposed, would require legislation to carry it out, and therefore could not do anything immediately. He quite agreed in the principle of cheap postage as far as possible, but, considering the probable loss it would prove to each colony, he must ask Mr. Duffy to withdraw his motion. He admitted that now the ocean postage had been reduced to 2½d., it did seem high to charge 2d. within the colonies.

The Hon. J. G. Ward thought Mr. Duffy was to be complimented upon the able way he had set forth the information he had gathered on the matter. The resolution had his entire sympathy, and were it not for the fact that the New Zealand Government during the next Parliament would bring down a measure to make the penny postage universal within the colony—which would involve a loss of their revenue estimated at £57,000 a year at the outset—he would at once assist Mr. Duffy in his desire to have cheap intercolonial postage. Their Parliament had not yet had an opportunity to consider the effects of the reduction they contemplated making in their own postage. Mr. Duffy would, however, see that it was impossible for him to support the resolution at this juncture. He felt that, in view of the ocean postage having been reduced to 2½d., the rate of 2d. should not continue within their own borders, and the first duty of his Government would be to give their own people the advantage of cheap inland postage. He hoped, however, that at the next Postal Conference the resolution now submitted would meet with the favourable consideration it deserved.

The Hon. B. S. Bird would like to see cheap postage in the colonies and throughout the entire world, but a question like that had to be considered from the standard of each colony, and it was evident that any resolutions they could carry there could have no weight beyond a mere expression of opinion on the matter. In Tasmania they could not make the change without altering their law, and he apprehended the same remark applied to all the colonies, so that, beyond passing a resolution that it was desirable to have cheap postage, they could do nothing. He hoped the time would not be far distant when there would be a law regulating the postage throughout the whole of the colonies; when they could look for uniform postal and telegraph rates, and other uniformities which they had been labouring to secure for many years past. He believed and hoped that federation was so near accomplishment that all these and similar matters would be uniformly dealt with. So, while expressing general sympathy with any proposal of the kind now made, he must