

APPENDIX D.

No. 2.—UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION CONGRESS.

WE submit the following Report and recommendations in reference to the Universal Postal Union Congress to be held at Washington in May, 1897 :—

The Australasian Colonies, on joining the Universal Postal Union (1st October, 1891), became entitled to representation at its Congresses and Conferences—that is to say, the whole of the Australasian Colonies are considered as one “country,” they may send one or several delegates if desired, all of whom may join in the debates, but have collectively only one vote at the Congress.

Briefly stated, the conditions under which the Colonies joined the Union were that Australasia should have one joint vote, and that, pending the next quinquennial meeting, no alteration in the maritime transit rates or reduction in postal charges should be made.

At the Postal and Telegraphic Conference held in Brisbane, in March, 1893, the following resolution was carried, viz. :—That, in the opinion of this Conference, one representative should be sent from Australasia on behalf of all the Colonies to represent them at the Postal Union Congress.”

At the New Zealand Postal and Telegraphic Conference, in March, 1894, the question of the appointment of a delegate to attend the Postal Union Congress at its next meeting was discussed, but a decision was postponed. And at the Hobart Conference, in February, 1895, a motion was carried that the question of electing a delegate to the Postal Union Congress be deferred until next Conference.

In May last a circular letter was received from the Berne Bureau, requesting, by the 30th June, particulars of the subjects which the Australasian Colonies desired to submit to the forthcoming Congress.

As Australasia is only one territory in the Postal Union, it follows that the Colonies must be unanimous, and with that object a list of subjects which it is proposed to bring forward was prepared and the views of the different Colonies invited. The replies received showed that there was little chance of arriving at unanimity by correspondence, and it was decided to postpone the matter until the next Inter-colonial Conference. At the same time the Bureau was informed that it was not possible to forward a list of proposals such as asked for until the Colonies had met in conference and endeavoured to come into agreement on the subjects which they proposed to bring forward. It was stated that the Conference would probably take place about September or October (but for various reasons it could not be convened until the present month); and a hope was expressed that it would not then be too late to include the Australasian subjects in the list, which it was understood was being prepared by the Berne Bureau. In reply, the Bureau points out that the date mentioned for our proposals will be too late to include them in the principal book, but suggests that they be collected and form a supplement, and forwarded to the Union Administrations, or distributed to the delegates at the time of the opening Session of the Congress.

We respectfully recommend that in view of the many important questions affecting the Colonies that will be discussed at the Washington Congress in May next, the Colonies should be represented thereat, and that the delegate should be accompanied by at least one postal expert, and be instructed on the following subjects :—

1. *Reduction of territorial transit rates chargeable under sub-section 1°, paragraph 3, Article 4, of Vienna Principal Convention.*

We consider that the following rates, namely, 2 francs per kilogramme (8½d. per lb.) for letters and post-cards, and 25 centimes per kilogramme (1½d. per lb.) for other articles, for the territorial transit through each intermediate country, is much too high, and we suggest that these rates be reduced to—

1 franc per kilo. (4½d. per lb.), and
10 centimes per kilo. (2d. per lb.), respectively,

which would even then be somewhat higher in the case of letters and post-cards than is now charged by Australian Colonies on forward mails.

2. *Reduction of sea transit rates.*

That in lieu of sub-section 2° §3 of Article 4 of the Vienna Principal Convention, the following be substituted, namely :—

For sea transits.	Letters or Post Cards.	Other Articles.
Not exceeding 2,500 miles	3 francs	20 centimes
Between 2,500 and 5,000 miles	6 francs	40 centimes
Between 5,000 and 7,500 miles	9 francs	60 centimes
Between 7,500 and 10,000 miles	12 francs	80 centimes
Over 10,000 miles	15 francs	1 franc

That sub-section 2° of §4 of Article 4 be suppressed.

That the necessary amendments be made in Article 5 §2, sub-section 1°; Article 17, §4 and §5; and §4 of Detailed Regulations 24 and 25, respectively, in order to bring the same into conformity with the changes proposed.

3. *Question of alteration of surcharges provided for in Article 5.*

We recommend the omission of the following words in sub-section 1 of paragraph 2, “25 centimes per single rate for letters,” as there is no country in the Union now availing itself of the right to make this charge on letters for Union countries, although the surcharge provided for in this Article is made on other articles.

4. *Re indemnity for the loss of registered articles, Article 8 of the Convention, clause 1.*

We think it desirable that in the interests of the countries where the system of indemnity is recognised, the Article should be amended by the insertion of the words “Not exceeding” after the word “indemnity,” and before “50 francs.” At the same time we may call attention to the fact that the Australasian Colonies have, in almost all cases, declined to accept responsibility in regard to registered articles.