

Hon. J. GAVAN DUFFY : We appointed a delegate, who has received similar instructions.

Hon. JOSEPH COOK would point out that the anomaly of such a reduction would be at once seen with the inland rate of 2d., and an agitation would at once arise for reducing the latter rate. The Colonies could not at present afford such reductions. Having to send the letters a distance of 14,000 miles, 2½d. per half ounce did not seem after all to be very excessive. He could easily understand the reduction from the old rate of 6d. to 2½d. It was felt in his colony, at any rate, that if the Government was in a position to grant concessions to the people, the same could be done in many more advantageous ways than by reducing the oversea rate for letters from 2½d. to 2d. per half ounce. Sentimental reasons might be given for the proposal, but sentimental reasons could stand no chance when there was a need for hard cash in the Treasury. At present the net loss to New South Wales alone in the maintenance of their postal relations with the outside world was just £20,000 per annum, and if this proposal was adopted it would mean an additional £3000 a year loss, and for the whole of the Australasian Colonies he supposed it would be £7000 to £8000 per annum. The latter sum might not seem very much distributed over all the Colonies, it was true, but the reduction would mean a demand for intercolonial and inland rates of postage to be reduced. A reduction of a halfpenny per half ounce in the oversea letters would not make any appreciable increase in the amount of correspondence, and altogether the matter of ½d. was not worth the doing. If the Colonies could see their way to substitute a 1d. letter rate it would be something ; but, of course, at present that could not be thought of. He therefore moved,—

“That, in the opinion of this Conference, it would be inadvisable to make any further reduction in the oversea postage rate until the way is clear for a reduction of the present large subsidies paid for the carriage of mails at present inland and colonial rates.”

Hon. J. GAVAN DUFFY seconded the motion. He did not think he had anything to add to the exhaustive statement which had been made by the Hon. Joseph Cook in this matter. He fully concurred with him that it would be an anomaly to reduce the postage rate as proposed whilst they were unable to reduce the rates to their own people within the Colonies. The rate of 2½d. per half ounce was not an excessive one. Until not long ago it was 6d., and that was excessive, and the correspondence was limited ; nobody could hold that a reduction from 2½d. to 2d. would increase the correspondence to any degree whatever. To put the matter in a nutshell, the Colonies could not afford it. A reduction of postage from England to 2d. all over the world was proposed in a Budget Bill of the British Chancellor of the Exchequer. Of course, such a reduction would not be felt in a wealthy country with an immense population, a high standard of education, and with a yearly surplus of three millions. At the Washington Postal Conference, when such a reduction was proposed, it had very little support. Then the Imperial Government dwelt upon 2½d. being an excess of the 25 cents stipulated in the Postal Union treaty, but still England had little support, the general feeling being that England ought not to make a reduction below what was considered fair all over the world.

Hon. J. R. DICKSON said hon. members who had spoken had voiced the opinion that Queensland held in this matter. He did not think the reduction was demanded by the public, and it would not mean any appreciable increase in the quantity of letters that would be posted. Queensland had sustained a loss of £34,000 in consequence of the reduction seven years ago from 6d. ; but he would not say that they should revert to the 6d. rate. He was aware that Mr. Henniker Heaton was always advocating reductions in postal rates, and the Imperial Government seemed to favour the idea ; but the Australian Colonies could not at present entertain such proposals.

Hon. J. G. JENKINS, on behalf of South Australia, supported the motion. The main point had been tersely made by Mr. Cook when he said there was no great demand for the reduction in question at the present time beyond what Mr. Henniker Heaton and a few commercial men had advanced. Moreover, it would be followed by an agitation for such a reduction of intercolonial rates which could not be made.

Motion put and passed.

#### *The Canadian Three Cents proposals.*

The consideration of proposal of Canada to reduce postage on letters to all parts of the British Empire from 5 cents to 3 cents was taken in Committee, when the following resolution was passed :—

“That this Conference communicate by cable with the Canadian Postmaster-General to the effect that the various Colonies cannot agree to receive Canadian letters with only 3 cents postage thereon, and ask that the proposal be not proceeded with.”

#### *Queensland's Surcharges.*

“*Re* Queensland surcharging New Zealand postal matter prepaid at the ½d. per 2 oz. rate.”

Hon. JOSEPH COOK said that some years ago New Zealand had this low rate on printed matter in existence. The question, however, was then raised by New Zealand whether she would be compelled to revert to the higher rate of postage on printed matter. He took it that New Zealand still continued to impose the ½d. rate, but did not know if Queensland surcharged.

Hon. J. R. DICKSON : She has to surcharge under the statute law.