

the labours of the representatives at the Congress was now before them. He hoped that they would ratify the treaty which he had had the honour of signing on behalf of Australasia. The treaties themselves had only just reached the Colonies, and the English translations had not yet arrived. He had taken out all the changes made by the last Congress in the treaty of Vienna, by which they were formerly bound. These changes had been printed (see page 43), but he realised that it would be hard to follow them without having the full context of the Convention itself before them. At these meetings of postal matters a great amount of minor detail had to be considered. He desired to call attention to the second part of his motion. It struck him when at Washington that it would be better if they were furnished with all information about the subsidiary treaties. It would be well to be furnished with those treaties in order to consider them at leisure to see if they would not be of advantage to the Colony on the whole. Although nothing might be done in the matter for a year or two, he desired to draw attention to them with a view to having them dealt with at the next Conference. There might be in the treaties some advantage worthy of adoption. The treaty also contained several clauses making it optional to do certain things if it were possible to do so. He understood that all the optional points that were in the old treaty of Vienna had been carefully considered. A matter that had been introduced of somewhat minor importance was the colour of stamps. He was not sure that they need trouble themselves about that, because if federation were brought about it would put postal matters in Australia on a different footing. Before he left Washington he had sent a short report to the various administrations which he represented which he thought contained pretty well the gist of the matter. In accordance with instructions he twice brought before the Congress the question of prohibiting the carriage in the mails of indecent and obscene literature. He regretted to say that his motion was both times lost by a majority of four votes; not that the majority approved of the matter, but that they were afraid of establishing what might be a censorship of the post offices. A material matter in which the treaty of Washington made a change from the former treaty was on the question of transit rates and the taking of statistics. By a large majority a motion had been carried reducing territorial and maritime transit rates. It was decided that the statistics should not be taken afresh before the meeting of the next Congress, which would meet at Rome in about five or six years hence, but were to be calculated on the last statistics taken in 1896. In other respects it went without saying the treaty at Washington was certainly a benefit to all the countries within the postal union, and a great deal of care had been taken and skill displayed in remedying the defects of the former treaty, and putting the whole business of the union on a better and surer basis.

The PRESIDENT said it was understood the second portion of the motion dealing with the reference to the permanent heads was to be taken first.

Hon. J. R. DICKSON rose to second the motion, and, referring to Mr. Duffy's interesting speech, said that gentleman had justified the wisdom of selection made in him as the representative of Australasia. In Queensland the Postal Department had but just come into possession of the very bulky tome containing a report of the Conference, and the heads of departments could not yet be fully conversant with the bearing of the various proposed changes, and it was therefore very desirable a report should be obtained from them before they recommended the Governments of Australasia to ratify the treaty as a whole. The press reports of the Washington Conference had been very meagre—

Hon. J. GAVAN DUFFY: Yes, we had great difficulty with the American press. One day we would be referred to as snobs, and another as puppets of European kings. (Laughter.)

Hon. JOSEPH COOK supported the motion, and thought it very necessary the permanent heads should report as to how the proposals would affect the colonies. Some very serious alterations were proposed in respect to territorial and maritime transit rates that would affect the British Empire much more than any other people in the world, for the simple reason that Great Britain had such a preponderance of the traffic of the world, and it would be well for the permanent heads to let them know what these alterations would mean even to these colonies. The reductions, it was true, were proposed on a sliding scale over a term of years, but at the present time they did not know what the probable effect would be.

Hon. J. G. JENKINS supported the motion, and, after remarks highly complimentary to Mr. Duffy, agreed with Mr. Cook that the proposed changes in territorial transit rates was a matter needing careful consideration by the permanent heads before unqualified approval was expressed.

Hon. J. GAVAN DUFFY, closing the debate, considered the transit rate question a most important one, and this had been a subject of the greatest controversy at the Washington Congress, the result being in reality a compromise between the views of the German representative on the one side, and the English and Colonial on the other. He himself had got a little more heated than he need have done during those discussions, which were in French, and had intimated that, though signing the treaty, if the fact proved that the loss involved was greater than the Colonies could reasonably bear, advantage would have to be taken of a clause allowing any State to withdraw from the Union. This extreme measure he did not, however, anticipate would be necessary.

The second part of the motion was put and passed. (See Report of Sub-Committee, p. 75.)

Hon. J. GAVAN DUFFY moved that the first part of the original motion be discharged, and made an order for next day.

The motion was agreed to.