

No. 21.

The DIRECTOR, International Bureau, Universal Postal Union, Berne, to the SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington.

[Translation.]

SIR,—

Berne, 20th June, 1907.

Referring to my circular No. 2082/94 of the 6th April, 1907, I have the honour to inform you, on behalf of the Postmaster-General's Department of the Commonwealth of Australia, that the agreement mentioned in the above-mentioned circular is now likewise extended to letters exchanged between the offices of the Commonwealth and the offices of the British colonies of Bahamas, Honduras, Bermuda, Mauritius, and Guiana.

I have, &c.,
RUFFY, Director.

[P.O. 07/820(7).]

No. 22.

The HIGH COMMISSIONER to the Hon. the PRIME MINISTER.

(Memorandum.)

Westminster Chambers, 13 Victoria Street, London, S.W., 26th June, 1907.

As requested by your letter of the 30th April [not printed], I have obtained three copies of Return No. 117, on the subject of universal penny postage, which was ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on the 9th April, 1906, and beg to enclose them herewith.

The Hon. the Prime Minister, Wellington.

W. P. REEVES.

[P.O. 07/820(1).]

Enclosure in No. 22.

PENNY POSTAGE.

RETURN to an Order of the Honourable the House of Commons, dated 3 April, 1906, for copy "of Letters addressed to the Postmaster-General by the Hon. Member for Canterbury, dated October, 1904, and February, 1906, on the Subject of Universal Penny Postage (in continuation of Parliamentary Paper No. 34 of Session 1887)."

General Post Office, April, 1906.—Sydney Buxton.

(Mr. Henniker Heaton.)

UNIVERSAL PENNY POSTAGE.

1.

To the Postmaster-General of Great Britain.

MY DEAR POSTMASTER-GENERAL,—

London, October 31st, 1904.

Permit me to call your earnest attention to the most important subject that can possibly come before you—that of establishing cheap postal and electrical communication with the outer world.

With pride we hear our gracious sovereign spoken of as "Edward the Peacemaker," and all would further his beneficent aims; the Englishman who can do most to further them is the Postmaster-General.

Nations, like individuals, are less likely to quarrel if in free communication than if they wrap themselves in savage isolation. The gentle Ælia remarks on two men who had never seen one another before meeting and instantly fighting. The chief reason, no doubt, was that they were strangers.

In any case, the existing foreign postal tariff is a disgrace to civilisation; it is doomed; and it is to be hoped that the voice of an English Minister will first be heard calling for its abolition. What will Macaulay's New-Zealander say, on hearing that we pay 1d. for sending a letter 12,000 miles *via* Calais to Australia, and 2½d. for sending a similar letter twenty-one miles, from Dover to Calais?

After ascertaining his author's reputation for veracity, will he not conclude that our rulers had observed something noxious to our national character, a sort of normal absinthe, in unrestricted communication with France?

The glaring injustice of the 2½d. rate to the Continent and the United States is shown in other ways. In Austria, where I was recently, I could send a letter right across that country and Germany, from the Russian frontier to the North Sea, for 1d., by virtue of a "restricted" Postal Union between the two Empires. Such restricted unions have long existed between groups of neighbouring European States, and between the great North American Powers.

Why have we alone refrained from forming these graceful and profitable alliances with our neighbours?

It will be objected that the 2½d. rate is necessary to meet the exorbitant transit charges of the Continental railways. This argument was used to defend the old 5d. and 6d. postal rates to India and the East. It does not apply at all to our American correspondence; but even there excessive charges are made in one direction. The question is not how to benefit British writers to the colonies, but to benefit our Continental friends equally with ourselves. In the light of this