

Prospect of more Frequent Service to Australia.

With regard to the restoration of the full weekly service to Australia, the P. & O. have built, or are building, four new ships, and when these are completed there would be some prospect of a more frequent service. But there remains the question whether the passenger and cargo traffic would be sufficient to repay more frequent sailings, and this is an aspect of the question which would require some consideration when the time arrives.

Imperial Penny Post must be preceded by Internal Penny Post.

The question of the Imperial penny post naturally, as far as we are concerned, depends upon our being able to get an internal penny post. An internal penny post will cost us approximately £5,000,000 a year; and until we can get a penny post in this country it is obvious that we cannot have an Imperial penny post. The actual Imperial part of it is, roughly, half a million; that is to say, if we once got an internal penny post, to make it apply to the Empire would mean an extra half million; but that is relatively small. I have not any doubt that if once we got an internal penny post we would stretch it and make it an Imperial penny post. I know New Zealand is very proud of itself; it has already got it.

Mr. Massey: It has very good reason, when I hear what you have got to say about Britain.

The Chairman: I think it is useful to have that undertaking from the Postmaster-General, that when we get an internal one it will be an Imperial one.

Sir Laming Worthington-Evans: I think that can be done.

The Chairman: For the purpose of this afternoon we confine ourselves to the subjects raised by the Postmaster-General, and do not, I take it, digress into the wider shipping questions which will come up to-morrow.

Mail-services between Canada and Europe now on Pre-war Basis.

Mr. Graham: The question raised by the Postmaster-General as to the mail-service throughout the Empire is, of course, very interesting. Heretofore Canada has given a subsidy to certain lines to carry our mails. Now, we are willing to pay for the carrying of mails, and we do, to any ship that takes them, so that the mails do not have to wait for a boat of any particular line. As the Postmaster-General says in his statement, as to the rapidity of the mails between Canada and Great Britain, that is in pretty good condition, and I do not think we can very well improve on it at the present time. I think we can practically say that the mail-carrying between Canada and Europe is on a pre-war basis.

Canadian Post Office Department an expensive one.

In Canada, of course, our mail-service has got to be quite expensive, and the fact that we have undertaken rural-mail delivery in a country of wide expanse and sparse population—it is not extended, of course, to all parts of the Dominion—lays a heavy burden on the exchequer of the Post Office Department. But it gives us great satisfaction. The life of the rural citizen, who is far removed in some cases from the centres, is brought into daily, or almost daily, touch with the centres, and he is able to take his daily paper, which he could not do before.

Then, we have a parcel-post, which is another great expenditure, from the fact that the transportation of our mails costs so much more money now on account of the bulky nature of the parcels carried by parcel-post. So that on the whole this is a fairly expensive Department.

There is another call on the Post Office Department in Canada, owing to recent legislation, which will reduce not the income of the Government, but the income of the Post Office Department. We have, since the beginning of the war, and later, established certain stamp taxes. Up to the recent session postal stamps were allowed to be used on receipts or cheques or notes. The Minister of Inland Revenue took the view that the Revenue Department should have credit from the receipts for the purchase of the stamps, and Parliament passed an Act requiring all those using cheques, notes, receipts, &c., to use other stamps; so that the Postal Department will only have receipts from its own absolute postal revenue as from the 1st October, 1923.

Canadian Postal Rates to Great Britain.

The question has been raised with us by our own people, not by any person in Great Britain, that our postal rates discriminate against correspondence with Great Britain; not that our rates are higher than those of Great Britain, but that our rates are higher to Great Britain than to some other countries. Our rate is 3 cents to the United States, for we are compelled to charge as low a rate as we can, for the simple reason that for the last half-century there has been a Convention between the United States and Canada on postal rates. Our rate is 3 cents to them, and theirs is 2 cents to us. We charge more to Great Britain—i.e., 4 cents—for we follow the rate charged in Great Britain.

Question of Reduction of Rates.

As to the fixing of rates, of course, Canada is an adherent of the Berne Convention and has been for very many years. That Convention discusses postal rates, and meets again, I think, in Sweden next year, and it is possible by that time that the Dominion of Canada, and Great Britain as well, may be in a position to consider a reduction of rates; but I think it would be well for that to be left for discussion at that Conference, where all the nations of the world are represented, because postage is a matter between nations in which you cannot very well give a preference. You make a general consideration and survey of the whole situation. I just wished to say that it is not intended to make a discrimination.