

INTRODUCTION OF THE PENNY POSTAGE

Treas^y Nov 2/39

To the Right Hon the C of the Ex. Etc etc etc

Sir,

Having last night carefully gone over with Messrs Bokenham & Smith the mem. of yesterday's date with reference to the first steps to be taken under the New Postage Act I am now prepared to submit for yr considn my view on the subject in a more complete form.

In adopting these views I have been influenced by the followg considns.

1st, That it is important that the whole measure should be brought into operation as rapidly as is consistent with the mature consideration, & efficient execution of each part.

2nd, That the convenience of the public will be consulted by making the steps in the introduction of the measure as few as possible – if it were practicable to bring the whole measure into operation at once such an arragt. wd. no doubt be extremely difficult even if the present state of the London office (through wh. nearly half of the correspondence of the Kingdom passes) were favourable for so great & sudden a change, but as the building is rightly complained of by the officials as being very much too small for even the present amount of business, it is clear that until more space is obtained it would be very unsafe to take any steps which would lead to a great increase of letters – Besides the time required for the preparation of the stamps renders it necessary either to postpone operations altogether or to adopt some intermediate course.

As therefore the adoption of an intermediate measure will not delay the introduction of the whole plan – on the contrary the experience it will afford will rather accelerate

that introduction – there can be no doubt, I imagine, of the expediency of such a course.

The intermediate measure to be adopted ought I am of opinion to possess the following requisites.

1st. It should be of sufficiently decided character to satisfy public expectation.

2nd. It should not only as a whole be a step towards the final measure, but every individual alteration involved in it should lead in that direction, in order, that hereafter there may be nothing to undo.

3rd. It must be independent of the use of stamps.

4th. It must not involve the necessity of any immediate extension beyond what is already in progress of the office in St. Martins Le Grand.

5th. While for the reasons already assigned it must not bring about any very considerable increase of letters, it should if possible be such as to indicate with tolerable accuracy the probably increase thereafter – in order that the necessary addition if any to the present force may be provided in due time.

6th. It should as far as practicable simplify the operations of the P.O. so as in some degree at least, to compensate for whatever increase of business may take place.

7th. The measure should in some degree test the practicability of prepayment.

8th. It should introduce the practice of charging by weight as this being a charge which will undoubtedly be attended with considerable trouble to the P.O. in the first instance, it is important that it should take place while the number of letters is comparatively small.

9th. Any part of the measure which is experimental or in the working of which modifications may be necessary should if practicable be tried first in the London 2d. Post.

And lastly it should be such as not to deprive the final step when taken of its due share of popularity.

The followg. measure appears to me to possess these requisites in the highest possible degree – You will observe that (with the exception that I do not now propose to close the letter boxes earlier than at present) it is substantially the same as that suggested in the mem. of yesterday.

This exception is made at the suggestion of Mr. Bokenham who is of opinion that the previous practice in weighing will render the early closing of the letter boxes unnecessary.

In the London District Post, hitherto called the 2dny and 3dny Post.,

- 1 Let all letters not exceeding $\frac{1}{2}$ an oz in wt. whether for the 3 mile or 12 mile circle be charged 1d. each, provided the postage be prepaid.
- 2 Let the 2dny rate, on G.P. letters delivered beyond the 3 mile circle, be abolished.
- 3 Let all other arrangements, connected with this post continue as at present.

In the General Post.

- 4 Fix the maximum single postage at 4d. The inferior rate of 2d. for distances not exceeding 8 miles continuing as at present.
- 5 Let all extra postage charges whatever be abolished as for instance the addl. 1d. for the Penny Posts the $\frac{1}{2}$ on Scotch letters the 1d. for passing the Menai and Conway bridges & c.
- 6 Let all letters be charged by wt. according to the following scale:-

Not exceeding $\frac{1}{2}$ an oz.....	1 Postage
“ 1 oz.....	2 Postages
“ 2 oz.....	4 do.
“ 3 oz.....	6 do.

and so on adding 2 postages for every addl. ounce.

- 7 Require that all packets exceeding One Ounce weight shall be prepaid.

Foreign and Ship Letters

- 8 Apply the same scale of weight to the British charge on Foreign and Ship letters and extend the maximum of 4d. to the Inland postage on the same – in all other respects continue the present charges (the Inland postage on Outward Ship letters is already a uniform rate of 4d. On Inward Ship letters the rate is variable.)
- 9 Let arrangemts. extend to the whole of the British Isles, including the Isle of Man and Guernsey Jersey and the other Channel island. The Inland rate as it has been called including the sea postage between one part of the Kingdom and another.
- 10 Let them come into operation on Thursday the 5th of Decr next, that is to say, let them apply to all letters posted on or after that day.
- 11 As these measures will undoubtedly have the effect of increasing to some degree the number of letters it will be necessary to take care that any additional fees wh the Deputy Post-Masters or others receive as those on late letters for instance shall be carried to the General revenue. The payments to the Masters of ships should at the same time be reduced – say to one penny per letter.

Remarks on the above

I wd recomd that in taking the necessary steps under the Act to give effect to these arrangemts. the public be clearly informed that they are merely preparatory to the estt of a uniform Penny rate, and that the reasons for delaying the complete adoption of the plan be fully stated.

(Article 3) The operation of the London District Post wd be somewhat simplified by reducing the charge for the unpaid letters of the present 3dny district to 2d., but I think it would be better to reserve all further reductions till such time as the general scale of charge by wt. is applied to this post, as such application will have the effect of increasing the charges on the heavier packets very considerably.

(Article 4) A maximum single postage of 4d. would, as far as the London office is concerned, be absolutely uniform, and it may be worth consideration whether advantage may not be taken of this circumstance to reduce the labours of the office by inserting the charge (4d) in the journal Stamp and thus combining the Stamping and Taxing processes – an 8d letter wd. be stamped doubly and 1/- letter triply, beyond this is wd. probably be convenient to write the charge.

(Article 6) A scale of wt. ascending by greater steps wd. undoubtedly be somewhat more convenient to the P.O., but it wd., I fear, lead to a vexatious anxiety on the part of the public to avoid passing certain stages in the scale in order to escape the great increase of charge and it would increase the temptation to divide heavy packets of certain weights into two or more lighter ones – I have not proposed to fix any limit to the wt. of prepaid packets – at present there is no limit even to unpaid packets. If it shd. be thought expedient to fix a limit, it can be done when the rate is reduced to One Penny per ½ oz. If it shd be considered necessary to give the P.O. practice in weighing letters before the increase of letters comes on, charge by wt. might precede by a week or a fortnight the proposed reduction in the rates of postage.

(Article 7) Optional payment shd. not I think extend to greater weights than 1 oz. At present such weights are rarely sent through the P.O. but a reduced rate wd. increase their number and the withdrawal of the option hereafter might be attended with difficulty – Besides the restriction will protect the office from the occasional conveyance of heavy packets as at present for which nothing is received.

Mr Bokenham is of opinion that the evening duty wd. be very much facilitated if an arrangement which he considers practicable could be adopted for bringing the great mass of letters from the Govt. Offices to the P.O. by 7 o'clock. He is apprehensive that the morning delivery may be delayed under the proposed arrangements. perhaps by half an hour, until the office which is much too small for even the present business shall have been enlarged.

With respect to the enlargement of the office I take the liberty of again stating my opinion that it will be inexpedient to incur any expense which may hereafter

create an obstacle to the estmt. of District Offices according to the plan which I proposed for the 2dy P. Dept. to the Commrs of P.O. Inquiry (vide 9th Report). This plan is equally applicable to the distribution of G.P. letters; and believing that it will greatly improve the Metropolitan delivery, I am exceedingly anxious that nothing should be done to interfere with its adoption when the progress of the general measure shall admit of the necessary attention being paid to the less important details – These observations do not apply to the proposed improvements in the ventilation of the P.O. a measure wh. I consider very desirable even if the number of men employed in the principal office were reduced.

I also think it my duty to suggest that should it be considered necessary to make any additions to the present force, all new engagements may be temporary, in order that the force may be again reduced, if when the new arrangements have been fully tried, such reduction be found practicable.

I have &c
R. H.

P.S. Nov 7. I have delayed forwarding the above report till this day in order to keep it open for any suggestions wh. Col. Maberly might wish to make with reference to the mem. of the 1st. Inst.