Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, 31st July 1866.

No. 596. Read the following Proceedings of the Madras Government in the Public Department:—

Referring to certain Officers, for report, letter from Director General of Post Office in India on the subject of the proposed abolition of District Post Delivery Fee. } (Here enter 23rd July 1866, No. 739.)

No. 597. ORDER THEREON, 31st July 1866, No. 1,907.

Miscellaneous.

Communicated to the Board of Revenue.

(True Extract.)

Under Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue, with Proceedings, Public Department, No. 739.

Ed. T. Cartledge.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
23rd July 1866.

No. 127. Read the following letter from the Director General of the Post Office of India, to the Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George; dated Simla, 4th July 1866, No. 833.

The Government of the North-Western Provinces having recommended the abolition of District Post Delivery Fee, the levy of which is authorized by Rule 17* of General District Post Rules, I have been desired by the Government of India "to ascertain the opinions of the other "Local Governments and Administrations within whose territories the levy of the "fee in question is in operation besides the North-Western Provinces, whether it is "desirable to retain the fee."

* "Letters will be delivered by such persons and under "such rules as the Local Government may, from time "to time, determine. Every person through whom any "District Post letter may be delivered is authorized "to receive a fee of one pice(a fourth of an anna) for his "own use, in addition to any unpaid postage which may "be due on it."

2. I have, therefore, to request that you will bring under the consideration of His Excellency the Governor in Council the rule in question, and do me the favor to communicate to me the view which is taken by His Excellency in Council on the question whether the permission to levy the fee should be withdrawn or not.

3. I enclose printed extracts from correspondence on the subject, which have been received from the Government of India. The more obvious arguments for and against the levy of the fee may be gathered from the correspondence, but it may save some trouble if I state the object for which the levy of the fee was author-

for and against it.

4. By the first of the District Post Rules, it is ordered that, "whenever any "local establishment may be maintained for the conveyance of Police, Revenue, or "other official communications, it shall also be made use of for the conveyance and "delivery of private correspondence." It was by Rule 17 left to the Local Government to determine by what persons, and under what rules, letters should be delivered; but when the rules were framed, there was no special establishment for the delivery of private letters by District Post in any part of India, and letters were entrusted for delivery to the ordinary Police, or were given to village watchmen and other village servants, whose duties required them to make periodical visits to the Police Stations, which, under Rule 3, were constituted District Post Offices. As some remuneration for the extra service required of them, and also as a security for delivery of the letters, every person through whom a District Post letter might be delivered, was authorized to levy, "for his own use," a delivery fee of one pice (one-fourth of an Anna). The persons through whom delivery was made were not servants of the Post Office, nor was the delivery of letters part of their ordinary duty.

5. The objections to the levy of the fee were, as far as I know, first brought forward by Captain Battye, in the letter No. 10512, dated 9th April 1865, an extract from which accompanies this communication. They are,—1*st*, that it is obnoxious to the rural community as an additional and unfair impost; 2*nd*, that it acts as a bar to increase of correspondence; 3*rd*, that, in consequence of the charge of a delivery fee, many paid letters are refused; 4*th*, that in order to avoid its payment, members of the trading community in the interior adopt measures for receiving

delivery of their letters from the nearest General Post Office, instead of making use of the District Post; *5th*, that the fee is levied chiefly from landholders, who, as a class, already pay the special tax which is assessed (in the North-Western Provinces) for the carrying of the District Post, and who, therefore, feel great dissatisfaction when they have, in addition, to pay a delivery fee; *6th*, that the realization of the fee is attended with annoyance and inconvenience to the officials of the Postal Department.

6. I will make a few remarks on the above objections, before stating the reasons which may justify the levy of the fee under the state of things contemplated by the Rules. The 6th objection is that the realization of the fee is attended with inconvenience to Postal Officials. The answer to this is that no person in the employ of the Post Office, or paid by the Post Office, is authorized to levy a delivery fee. The 5th objection does not appear to have much greater weight;—the cess levied from landholders for the establishment employed in the conveyance of the District Post is in lieu of the duty imposed on them of conveying through their several estates the official correspondence of the District; it does not provide for the delivery of private letters to traders and others, or even to those who contribute to the cess. With regard to the 4th objection, I believe that the delays and irregularity of the District Post induce traders to make arrangements for the receipt of their letters at a General Post Office, rather than trust to the District Post. It is not easy to determine what weight should be given to the 3rd objection; but the number of letters returned from the District Post in the North-Western Provinces undelivered was 247,127 in 1864-65, and only 168,769 in 1865-66. The 2nd objection is without foundation; the number of covers sent for delivery by the District Post in the North-Western Provinces having increased from 977,590 in 1863-64 to 1,286,714 in 1865-66—an increase of about 31½ per cent. The 1st objection has force only if the additional delivery fee can justly be looked upon as an "unfair impost."

7. The grounds on which the charge can be defended may be very briefly stated. It is impossible to extend a free Post delivery to every village in the interior. Even in Great Britain this is not attempted; where letters are delivered beyond the limits of an ordinary Post delivery by a person not paid for the delivery of letters, a payment of some kind must be made to him, and I am disposed to think that the best plan is to authorize the levy of a small fixed fee on each letter delivered. The delivery of letters is partly secured, and, as the payment to be made is known, undue exaction is rendered more difficult.

8. Where rural messengers or ordinary letter-carriers are regularly employed for the collection and distribution of letters in a village or definite circle of villages, the places included in the rural delivery are within an ordinary Postal delivery, and no extra fee should be demanded; but when letters are delivered by Police or by village servants, the fee should, I think, be allowed.

9. The question for consideration is whether Rule 17 should remain unaltered and be generally enforced, or, if some change is desirable, what change should be made.

Extract from correspondence relating to the management of the District Post in the North-Western Provinces.

Portion of paragraph 3 of letter from Government, North-Western Provinces, No. 1596A, *dated 6th May* 1865.

There is thus a deficiency of income to the extent of Rupees 5910. The Postmaster General at first proposed to meet this deficiency by a delivery fee of 3 pie on every letter. This fee has proved so obnoxious to the rural community, who now refuse even prepaid letters rather than pay it, and has so far acted as a bar to increase of correspondence, that the Postmaster General prefers to abolish it, and to meet the deficiency out of the surplus cess at present in deposit.

Paragraphs 6 to 10 of letter from the Postmaster General, North-Western Provinces, to the Government, North-Western Provinces, No. 10512, *dated 9th April* 1865, *being enclosure of the above letter.*

6. In submitting my first Report, as the grant-in-aid, Rupees 67,704, together with the sum realized as cess, did not make up the total of the estimated charges of the District Post, I proposed the continuance of "delivery fees" levied at the rate of 3 pie on every paid and bearing letter delivered through the agency of the District Post, and included the receipts under the head estimated at Rupees 5000 in my Memorandum of receipts and charges.

7. The experience of the last few months has shown the "delivery fee" charge to be in many ways objectionable: it is obnoxious to the rural community subjected to it, who look upon it in the light of an additional and unfair impost; its realization is attended with annoyance and inconvenience to the officials of the Postal Department; and there is no doubt that, with such a general feeling of dislike to the charge, it acts as a bar to the increase of correspondence.

8. Many paid as well as bearing letters are now refused in consequence of the extra delivery fee charged on them, and the inconvenience and loss occasioned to the senders of paid letters especially, by the refusal on the part of the addressees to receive them, has been very great. The demand, small as it is, appears to be so much disliked that several of the trading community in the interior, in order to avoid it, adopt measures for receiving delivery of their letters from the nearest General Post Office, even though it may be situated at a far greater distance from their village than a District Post Office.

9. For the above reasons, I am strongly of opinion that the charge should be discontinued, and I respectfully beg to recommend that it be discontinued from 1st May 1865.

10. The small pecuniary loss at first shown by the withdrawal of the delivery fee charge, will, I feel confident, in the course of a couple of years, be made good by the increase of the rural correspondence; in the meanwhile, and until the increased receipts from cess, as proposed in paragraph 4, are realized and brought to credit, the difference between the funds and charges of the District Post Establishment can be met from the amount now in deposit in the several Treasuries at the credit of the District Dâk Fund, Rupees 62,112, which, as will be seen by the subjoined Memorandum, is sufficient for the next twelve years.

Paragraph 6 of Mr. Riddell's Note, dated May 1865.

6. The Lieutenant Governor supports Captain Battye's proposal to remit the delivery fee of one pice which is now levied under the general rules passed by the Governor General in Council for the management of the District Post. As the question is a general one, affecting the whole of India, it had probably be better considered separately. I do not entirely agree with Captain Battye. I believe the levy of the fee to be a security for the delivery of the letters; and, as it has been levied for upwards of ten years, it cannot now be considered a novelty.

Paragraph 4 *of letter, No.* 1633, *dated* 17*th June* 1865, *to the Secretary to Government, North-Western Provinces, and endorsement, No.* 1634, *of the same date, to the Director General of the Post Office of India.*

4. As regards the proposal to abolish the levy of the delivery fee, I am directed to observe that the question is a general one affecting a system which has been in force for upwards of ten years, and which is not confined in its operation to the North-Western Provinces. In this view the matter will be made the subject of separate consideration, and meantime the levy of the fee in the North-Western Provinces should be maintained.

Copy forwarded to Director General, with a request that he will favor the Government of India with a special report on the question of the abolition of the delivery fee, which has been reserved (paragraph 4) for separate consideration.

Paragraph 5 *of letter from Secretary to Government, North-Western Provinces, No.* 617*A, dated* 24*th February* 1866.

5. In regard to the abolition of the delivery fee, I am desired to state that its levy has hitherto been confined to eighteen Districts of these Provinces; and as, it is extremely irritating and unpopular, and must tend greatly to check the increase of Native correspondence passing through Mofussil Post Offices, His Honor would advocate its immediate abolition. He believes that the present financial loss to Government would be trifling, and would be speedily made up by an increase of Native letters.

Paragraph 5 *of letter, No.* 2600, *dated the* 17*th March* 1866, *to the Secretary to the Government of the North-Western Provinces, and endorsement, No.* 2601, *of the same date, to the Director General of the Post Office of India.*

5. The remarks made in paragraph 5 will, I am to state, be communicated to the Director General of the Post Office, from whom a report is still due on the question of the abolition of the delivery fee.

Copy of the above letter, and of that to which it is a reply, forwarded to the Director General of the Post Office, with an intimation that the Government will be glad to receive his report on the question of delivery fees, called for in this Office Endorsement, No. 1634, dated the 17th of June.

Paragraphs 2 *to end of letter, No.* 3590, *dated* 31*st March* 1866, *from the Director General of the Post Office of India.*

2. With regard to the levy of one pice per letter on delivery, I am not prepared to recommend that it should be discontinued. Its levy is not sanctioned as a means of increasing the postal revenue, although, as a tax, it might, in my opinion, be justified, on the ground that the delivery of letters beyond the ordinary limit of a post delivery entails an extra charge, and therefore is justly charged with an additional tax. It is not, however, on this ground that I now advocate the continued levy of a delivery fee on letters delivered out of the limits of an ordinary post delivery. The levy is really for the protection of the persons whose letters are sent for delivery by District Post. If a fee has to be collected or accounted for on each letter, the person to whom a letter is entrusted is not so liable to be tempted to destroy the letter, in order to save the trouble of finding the addressee.

3. It is very difficult, if not generally impossible, to convict a letter-carrier who may destroy an unregistered paid letter. I need hardly say that in a rural delivery, where the letter-carrier may have to walk some miles for the delivery of a single letter, he is under considerable temptation to save himself trouble by destroying such a letter; and, small though the sum apparently is, I believe that the knowledge that they would have to pay in cash one pice for each paid letter destroyed, in practice, prevents letter-carriers from making away with letters.

4. As, therefore, the levy of a delivery fee tends to secure the safe delivery of letters in remote rural districts, and as it is justifiable as being a special though inadequate payment for a special service, I do not feel disposed to recommend that it should be discontinued.

5. During the past year, new Post Offices have been opened in the North-Western Provinces and, of course, there has been a proportionate decrease in the number of places in which a deliver fee is leviable.

6. A similar practice obtains in some parts of Great Britain, and is not made there the subject of complaint, the reasonableness of the charge being admitted.

Paragraph 3 *of letter from Government, North-Western Provinces, No.* 1101, *dated* 3*rd April.*

3. As the question of the abolition of the delivery fee is still under the consideration of the Government of India, I am desired by the Lieutenant Governor to take this opportunity of calling attention to one objectionable feature of the fee which has not yet been prominently noticed, namely, the fact that it is levied chiefly fr[om] [per]s, who, as a class, already pay the special ta[x] which is assessed for the carrying of t[he] [ma]k, and who, therefore, naturally feel great dis[-] satisfaction when they have, in additi[on] delivery fee.

Extract from a demi-offici[al] Mr. Riddell in regard to the above.

I have nothing to add to the view[s] my letter of 31st March, except that Zemin[-] dars are taxed for the conveyance of [let]ters pondence, not for the delivery of private letters

No. 128. ORDER THE[REON] July 1866, No. 739.

Referred to the Honorable[the Board of Revenue] to the Postmaster General, and to al[l] Collectors of Districts, for rep[ort] (extract).

A. J. ARBUTHNOT,
Ch. Secretary.

the Honorable C. Pelly.
" Postmaster General.
" Revenue Department
" Collector of [illegible]

Ad. J. H. Burns.

Revenue 1860 Oct
Pro of Govt for July
No. 2238.

Proceedings of the
Madras Govt in
the Public Dept

Dated 23d July
Recd

Referring to certain
Officers for report letter from Director
General of Post Offices in India on the
subject of the proposed abolition of
District Post Delivery Fees.

No. 596-597

Recd 1907-31 July
Write order

No 1907

Communicated to
the Board of Revenue

31st July 1907

4 Spies to the Dep Regr with Pro Ms No 1709 dated 1 Aug