

Brawford 1870(21)

POSTAGE LABELS.

RETURN to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 9 February 1852;—for,

COPIES “of a LETTER addressed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer by the Patentee of the Plan for PERFORATING POSTAGE LABELS, on the 31st day of December 1851; together with Copies of the LETTERS and PAPERS marked (A.) and (B.) which were forwarded therewith:”

“And, of a LETTER addressed to the Patentee by the Secretary to the Treasury on the 24th day of January 1852; together with a Copy of the Patentee’s Reply thereto.”

(Mr. Muntz.)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 27 February 1852.

18, Upper Eccleston-place, Eccleston-square,
31 December 1851.

Sir,

HAVING at the close of the last Session of Parliament authorized me to see the Postmaster-general, with a view of obtaining a settlement of my claims as patentee of the machine furnished by me to the Commissioners of Excise for perforating the sheets of postage labels, I deem it right, for your information, to state, that I had an interview with the noble Marquis on the subject shortly after his return from the Continent in September last; and in consequence of what passed between us on that occasion, I was induced to address to him the accompanying letter.

As I have been since informed by the authorities at the Post-office that his Lordship, shortly after he received the same, communicated with you on the business, I am compelled, by various circumstances, to request you will be pleased to favour me with your decision at your earliest convenience.

I venture, at the same time, to hope, that the fact of my being detained in London three years superintending the construction of the machine, and two years more waiting in daily expectation of a settlement, will, independent of other considerations, be regarded by you as a sufficient apology for my troubling you again on the matter.

The Right Hon.
Sir Charles Wood, Bart., M.P.

I hav , &c.
(signed) Henry Archer.

4, Eccleston-terrace, Eccleston-square,
6 October 1851.

My Lord,

As your Lordship was pleased to say, when I recently had the honour of an interview with you, that you would see the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with the view of conferring with him as to the best mode of arranging with me as the patentee of the machine for perforating the postage labels, I deem it right, for your Lordship’s satisfaction, to repeat in writing what I verbally stated to your Lordship at the interview referred to, namely, that I am willing to undertake, conjointly with Mr. Branston, the engraver to the former Commissioners of Excise, to contract, not only for perforating, but for engraving, printing and gumming

gumming the postage labels in a manner very superior to the present, at a price that will enable the Government to save to the Post-office 2,000 *l.* a year, the operation, for greater security, to be performed at Somerset House or at the Post-office.

I am also willing that the comparative advantages of my improved over the present stamps should be tested in the practical way suggested by your Lordship, namely, that the old and the new stamps should for a given time be issued to the public in equal proportions, or as they may be called for or required. In case the new stamps should not be preferred by the public, I will not require any remuneration.

I beg further to state, that I have no objection to abide by the course usually adopted by the Post-office in compensation cases.* Neither would I object to refer the whole question to some military engineer of rank, to inquire and decide or report what arrangement should be made, or what amount of compensation I am fairly entitled to.

I have the honour herewith to forward to your Lordship the accompanying papers.

Paper (A.) explains the great superiority of the proposed over the present mode of printing and gumming the stamps.

Paper (B.) is forwarded to satisfy your Lordship that, in order to secure that the perforating system shall be fairly dealt with and successfully carried out, it is essentially necessary that printers, who are known to be adverse to it, should not be employed to print and perforate the sheets of postage labels.

The Postmaster-general.

I have, &c.
(signed) *Henry Archer.*

PAPER (A.)

ADVANTAGES of the proposed Mode of Printing and Gumming the POSTAGE LABELS over the present.

ACCORDING to the present mode of printing the postage labels, not more than 300 sheets per hour, or 3,000 sheets per day of 10 hours, can be struck off; and as the official hours of the various public offices in Somerset House are from half-past nine to four o'clock, and the daily consumption of postage sheets about 3,000, it is obvious that little more than one-half of the number required to supply the public could be printed if the operation was performed at the Stamp-office; and the former Commissioners of Stamps were therefore compelled to have the labels engraved, printed and gummed by private parties out of Somerset House.

The present mode of engraving and printing the sheets is also very objectionable in other respects:

1st. Because the impressions from the plates are unavoidably so very indistinct and confused, that they afford little or no guarantee against fraud, since an excellent resemblance of them may readily be produced by an inferior artist.

2d. Because the peculiarity of the system is such that the space or white lines between the labels cannot be printed mathematically correct; neither can the sheets be prepared in such a way as will effectually prevent any change in their length or breadth taking place on account of shrinking, and consequently the perforating operation is not only rendered imperfect, but much more difficult and expensive.

3d. Because it is not possible by the present mode to make, at the time the sheets are printed, the holes that are necessary for registering the sheets in the perforating machine; they therefore have to be subsequently made in them by hand instead of by the printing plates, so that as these holes, from neglect or otherwise, are not always made in the same place or of the same size, very considerable trouble, and frequently a loss of several sheets, occurs.

To remedy the objections above referred to, amongst many others, the proposed mode of engraving and printing the labels is respectfully submitted to the consideration of the Commissioners:

1st. Because,

* All questions of disputed compensation are decided by the Post-office by arbitration.

1st. Because, by adopting it, 3,000 sheets per hour can be readily printed, whereby the labels, for greater security, may be engraved and printed at Somerset House, under the entire surveillance of the public officers, instead of at private premises as at present.

2d. Because it will not only enable the impressions at all times to be printed perfectly distinctly, and the white or guide lines mathematically true, but allow the registering holes to be made in the sheets at the same time that they are printed.

3d. Because it will enable the sheets to be prepared and printed in such a way as will effectually prevent any change taking place from the operation of shrinking.

4th. Because, by gumming the sheets with pure white gum instead of the "glutinous wa-h" at present used for the purpose, the labels will adhere more firmly to the letters, and also render them perfectly innocuous when applied to the mouth.

PAPER (B.)

EXTRACT from a MEMORIAL presented in May 1850 to the Lords of the Treasury, by the Patentee of the Machine for perforating POSTAGE LABELS, showing the Obstructions thrown in his way by the present Printers of the said Labels, in order to prevent the perforating system being brought into successful operation.

THAT subsequently to this successful preliminary trial, that is to say, on the 6th day of December 1848, your memorialist was directed by the said Commissioners of Stamps and Taxes to forward the machine invented by him to the establishment of their printers in Fleet-street, to ascertain whether they could work it for the purpose designed.

That your memorialist complied with such order, though with the full expectation that as such printers were in the exclusive enjoyment of a most valuable contract which your petitioner's invention might possibly altogether destroy, such invention would certainly derive no assistance at their hands, but would on the contrary be liable to every description of objection, real or imagined. That your memorialist entertained such fears, not from any supposition that the said printers were other than honourable, fair-dealing tradesmen, but on the general principles of human nature, as applied to matters of commerce, that it was not in the nature of things to be expected, that persons who are liable to be seriously injured by a given process could feel an interest in its welfare.

That in order fully to place before your Lordships the facts of this part of the case, your memorialist states that the said printers were and are employed by the Government to print the Postage Label Sheets, as such printers were the patentees of a system of engraving supposed to offer greater security against fraud than any other mode, and that upon such assumption it was originally deemed desirable to enter into a contract with them, although the price paid to them is (as will be found on inquiry) about three-fifths more than would cost for printing the sheets in the ordinary way.

That the said Commissioners, perceiving that the co-operation of the said printers during the construction of the machine was essential to its success, directed them (when they ordered the same to be made) to confer with the machinist employed by your memorialist whenever it became necessary to consult them. Notwithstanding, however, such directions, and that moreover they were well aware, from various other circumstances, that the Commissioners, the Secretary, and Mr. Hill were on public grounds most anxious to see the plan adopted, they thought proper to exhibit on various occasions their dislike and hostility to it in so marked a manner, that the person engaged by your memorialist to construct the machine was ultimately compelled to cease communicating with them.

That, under these circumstances, your memorialist, and the party who constructed the machine, had their misgivings increased when, by the direction of the said Commissioners, it was forwarded to their printers to be put in use by them, and your memorialist therefore was not at all surprised to find that upon the first day of trial, at the establishment of the said printers, the machine was found not to act, in consequence of the punching tools and the matrixes having become clogged and choked with gum.

That, in consequence of this mishap, Mr. Hill, with a view of ascertaining whether the process of gumming the paper was or was not unfavourable to the operation of punching, requested Mr. De la Rue, a gentleman who has had great experience in such work, to give him his opinion on the subject.

That Mr. De la Rue reported to Mr. Hill, that so far from gum impeding, he found from experience that, if properly applied, it considerably facilitates the operation of punching, inasmuch as it gave a solidity and brittleness to the paper which was highly desirable; and he was of opinion that the machine would never have clogged if the gum upon the sheets had not been moist when they were introduced into it.

That your memorialist was therefore obliged to remove the machine from the said printers, in order to have it put in order by those who understood its peculiar construction, as well as to make some alterations and improvements suggested by Mr. Hill and Mr. De la Rue.

4 CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO POSTAGE LABELS.

Your memorialist also begs to state, that the guide lines of the sheets printed by the said printers were found to be so very irregular and variable in breadth, that it was impossible to punch the sheets in the proper direction; and Mr. Hill therefore directed them to prepare new plates, in order to print the guide lines so mathematically true, as to remove effectually the objections referred to. It was also arranged that the said printers were to furnish your memorialist with one of the new sheets as soon as the new plates were made, so as to ascertain whether the machine conformed exactly therewith.

That accordingly your memorialist was furnished by the said printers with a model sheet, as soon as they had completed the first set of new plates.

That this sheet your memorialist handed to the party who was engaged to put the machine in order.

That when the machine was completed, it was found that it did not conform to this model sheet; and the machinist, assuming that the fault was owing to some defect in the machine, took it asunder again, and, at a great expense to your memorialist, altered it to suit the sheet so furnished by the said printers.

That the machinist having subsequently obtained one of the sheets for which the machine was originally constructed, discovered, for the first time, that the new model sheet differed so very materially from it, that it was at once evident to him, that if the former had not been made different in size from the latter, the expense and delay of reconstructing the machine would have been avoided.

That immediately upon this discovery, the machinist waited upon the said printers, and, having pointed out to them the difference between the two sheets, was for the first time informed by them, that subsequent to their furnishing to your memorialist the new model sheet for his guidance, they discovered that the plate from which it was printed was incorrect; yet the said printers, instead of instantly apprizing your memorialist, or the machinist employed by him, of this fatal defect, suffered them to remain in ignorance on the subject for nearly four months.

That your memorialist is induced to believe that the omission on their part was not accidental, from the fact that, when his machinist at this interview remonstrated with them upon their conduct, they hesitated not to tell him that it was no business of theirs to trouble themselves about a matter that was not likely to be of any benefit to them.

That on leaving the establishment of the said printers, they delivered to him for his future guidance a sheet which they said had been printed from one of the new plates that was found to be more correct than the plate from which the former sheet had been taken. Your memorialist was, therefore, obliged to have the machine again altered to suit exactly the dimensions of this sheet.

That as soon as the required alteration was made, your memorialist informed the authorities at the Stamp-office that the machine was ready for working, in consequence of which a preliminary trial was made in the presence of Mr. Hill, at the establishment of Mr. Addenbrooke, the machinist who constructed it.

It appeared, however, on this occasion, that the sheets which were printed from Plate A. were different in size from those printed from Plate C., and so on; but whether the difference was attributable to the shrinking of the sheets, or to a defect in the plates, or to both, could not be ascertained; under these circumstances, Mr. Hill came to the conclusion, that unless an adjusting power could be attached to the machine, to extend or contract its movement, to suit the various sizes of the sheets, he did not think it would answer the object designed.

That your memorialist is free to admit that Mr. Hill, under these circumstances, came to a very proper conclusion; yet, as the said printers, on the occasion of their measuring several of these sheets, at the instance of Mr. Hill and your memorialist, shortly before the machine had been commenced, stated that, as all the sheets were found to shrink alike, there would be no difference in size, your memorialist submits that he has just grounds for complaining that he had not been correctly informed on the subject in the first instance; because if he had been then aware that the sheets did not shrink alike, or that the new plates would not have been made so as to secure a conformity in the size of the sheets, he might have had an adjusting power attached to the machine for one-half of what it has cost him. At one time it was considered impossible to combine the two powers without making an entire new machine; however, after various contrivances and failures, a plan was at length discovered which enabled the machine to be instantly adjusted with unerring precision from a hair's breadth to six inches or more.

That your memorialist having communicated the fact to Mr. Hill, he, with a view of testing the efficiency of the adjusting power, had several sizes of the sheets passed through the machine in his presence, and finding that it uniformly punched them correct, he gave directions to your memorialist to forward the machine to the printers, to be put in use with a view of ascertaining more fully whether it would answer the desired object.

That, for the reasons already set forth, your memorialist considered that if he allowed the machine to be again returned to the said printers for the purpose of ascertaining its competency

tency for the required work, it was sure to be again worked in a manner but ill calculated to produce a favourable result; and he, therefore, explained to Mr. Hill his reasons for objecting to allow the machine to be worked by the said printers.

That Mr. Hill, admitting the reasonableness of your memorialist's objections, proposed with his usual straightforwardness, to accompany him and the machinist (who was cognizant of the facts referred to) to Mr. Keogh, the secretary of the Commissioners of Stamps and Taxes, with a view of ascertaining whether, under the circumstances, he would permit the machine to be tried at Somerset House, instead of at the establishment of the said printers.

That Mr. Keogh, conceiving that it was due both to the public and your memorialist to secure that the machine should have a fair trial, frankly stated that he would bring the matter before the Commissioners the first opportunity, with a view of obtaining their consent to have the machine worked at Somerset House, under Mr. Hill's superintendence.

That a few days after this interview, Mr. Hill, having received the Commissioners' permission, requested your memorialist to forward the machine for use to Somerset House.

That, in compliance with such request, your memorialist, on the 9th day of January last, sent it to the stamping department in that establishment.

That on the first day of trial it so happened, that numbers of the sheets which were passed through the machine were punched somewhat beyond the guide lines.

That the machinist who constructed the machine, feeling confident that the defect was attributable not to the machine but to the plates, asked Mr. Hill to allow him to measure the latter at the printers.

That Mr. Hill having given him permission to do so, he attended the next day at the office of the said printers, and measured the several plates, from which the sheets referred to were printed.

That although the plates now used by them were made, or professed to have been made, to suit the punching machine, more than one-half of them were found to be palpably defective; and it further appeared that the greater portion of the sheets furnished by the printers on the first day of trial were printed from the defective plates; it was therefore manifest, that the irregularities observed in the sheets which were punched on the first day of trial were not attributable to any defect in the machine; and this will appear the more obvious when your Lordships are informed that the sheets which, by Mr. Hill's directions, had subsequently been printed from the perfect plates were passed through the machine, no objection of any kind was observable; at the same time it is right to add, that even these were not printed as mathematically correct as they ought to have been.

Sir,

Treasury Chambers, 24 January 1852.

THE Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury having again had under their consideration your claim for the payment on account of the purchase of the machine invented by you for perforating postage labels, I am commanded by their Lordships to inform you that, under all the circumstances of the case, my Lords think that they may be justified in awarding to you a sum of 2,000 *l.* for the purchase of the machine in question, upon the distinct understanding that such amount is in full of all claims which you may have upon the Government on account of your invention.

H. Archer, Esq.

I am, &c.
(signed) *G. Cornwall Lewis.*

Sir,

18, Upper Eccleston-place, Eccleston-square,
26 January 1852.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 24th instant (which was this day handed to me at the Treasury), stating that "the Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury having again had under their consideration my claim for the payment on account of the purchase of the machine invented by me for perforating postage labels, under all the circumstances of the case, their Lordships think they may be justified in awarding to me a sum of 2,000 *l.* for the purchase of the machine in question, upon the distinct understanding that such amount is in full of all claims which I may have upon the Government on account of my invention."

As I consider the sum which has now been offered to me is wholly inadequate, I beg, in reply, to inform you that, "under all the circumstances of the case," I decline to accept of it.

As this is the third time I have been under the necessity of refusing offers, which from time to time have been made to me on the part of Her Majesty's Government, I deem it proper shortly to state the grounds that have induced me to do so on the present occasion, lest, in ignorance of the leading features of the case, it should be inferred that my conduct was unfair, and my expectations unreasonable:—

1st. I beg to draw attention to the fact, that in order to comply with the views of the Commissioners of Excise, I (contrary to the usual practice) undertook to construct the perforating machine, which I furnished to them on the condition that I was neither to be paid the cost of it, nor to receive any compensation for the invention, until both were found upon trial to answer the purposes for which they were designed. Having, therefore, made myself responsible for all expenses in the event of failure, it was reasonable for me to expect that when I had succeeded in overcoming every difficulty, I would be treated with commensurate liberality, or at least that the engagement made with me would be strictly and honourably observed, and that 300 *l.* would not have been tendered to me as payment for a machine which the Commissioners do not deny has cost me treble that sum.

2d. That I have incurred expenses for mechanics' wages on account of the machine to the amount of 900 *l.*, the greater portion of which expenditure was occasioned by the impediments thrown in my way by the present contractors for printing the postage labels, as set forth in Paper (B.) which accompanied my letter to the Postmaster-general, dated 6 October 1851, and admitted by the fact of the Commissioners having removed the machine from their premises to be worked by other parties.

3d. That I previously made two other machines for the Commissioners on a different principle, but they having upon trial proved unsatisfactory, I was obliged, under the arrangement referred to, to bear all the loss.

4th. That in the year 1848 I incurred the expense of taking out letters patent to secure the right of my invention.

5th. That I have been detained in London three years superintending the construction of the machine, and two years more waiting for a settlement, although from first to last, as the correspondence shows, I have done everything in my power to induce Her Majesty's Government to adopt a course that could not fail to bring about an honourable and amicable arrangement, and at the same time satisfy the public that their interest was not considered by the authorities as secondary to that of private parties.

6th. That in consequence of the proposal made in the letter I addressed to the Commissioners of Excise, 16 May 1851, they were enabled to effect a clear saving of 1,000 *l.* a year to the public, as admitted in their letter to me of the 27th of the same month. Independent, however, of these considerations, I feel bound to state, that having proposed in the letter which I had the honour to address to the Postmaster-general on the 6th October last, not only to perforate, but to engrave, print and gum the sheets of postage labels, in a manner very superior to the present, for 2,000 *l.* a year less than what is now paid for engraving, printing and gumming only; and having also stated that I believed, for the reasons set forth in that letter, the perforating system would be defectively and expensively carried out if the labels were not printed, gummed and perforated by parties not adverse to the latter process, I do not think I should be acting fairly towards the public, or the honourable Member for Birmingham, who has given notice to move for a Select Committee to inquire into the matter early next Session, if I consented to accept of any pecuniary compensation, at least for the invention, until some more impartial and competent tribunal than parties who are either pledged to the present mode of printing the labels, or interested in the contracts, has decided whether, on the grounds of economy, efficiency, security, despatch and public convenience, it is desirable to continue the present contract, or to accept the tender of Mr. Branston and myself.

Perhaps

Perhaps the Lords of the Treasury may not be aware that shortly after the Chancellor of the Exchequer was pleased, at the close of last Session, to refer back my claims to the Postmaster-general for re-consideration, the stamp distributor of the House of Commons certified, for the information of his Lordship, that the result of the experimental trial of the perforated labels which was made last year, by supplying them to Members during the Session, was decidedly successful, so much so, as to induce him to state, "that they were very highly approved of by the Members; that the sale was very considerably increased thereby, and a very general desire prevailed to possess the perforated labels, both within and without the House; and I have no hesitation in saying that they would be preferred by the public to those now in use, even at a small premium." The Post-office distributor of the district has also certified that he is "satisfied, from the opinions expressed to him by those who purchased the perforated labels at his office, that the public in general would willingly pay a shilling per sheet more for them."

Now assuming that no more than one-twelfth of this sum was charged, it is clear that, according to the present consumption, 6,000 *l.* a year might be readily made of the invention. As I do not, however, wish to be connected with public companies; and thinking, moreover, with many honourable Members, that the Government, for obvious reasons, is the proper party to possess the right of perforating the labels, I have hitherto refused to entertain many favourable offers which have been made to me by parties who were desirous to take the matter up as a commercial speculation. If, however, I find I cannot succeed in prevailing either on the Government or Parliament to accede to any of the reasonable proposals I have made, I shall in my own defence be compelled to appeal to the public through the medium of a joint stock company, or otherwise, for that fair compensation which the Commissioners of Excise, by their letter of 7th January 1848, led me to expect I would obtain as soon as I had succeeded in constructing a machine that was found upon trial to answer the purpose for which it was intended.

I have, &c.
(signed) *Henry Archer.*

Geo. Cornwall Lewis, Esq., M. P.
