

legislate in that way. My hon. friend (Mr. Mulock) knows that he cannot bring this legislation into force—at least he feels certain that he cannot—before next session of Parliament. Why, then, does he propose it? Why not wait until next session of Parliament? If then the revenues of the department are such as, in the opinion of the House, to justify such a measure, Parliament could then legislate with its eyes open. As it is, we are legislating to put a sort of weapon into a party man's hands, which may or may not be used. But aside from that, it is a vicious principle to leave public affairs, especially where heavy matters of revenue are concerned, subject to the will of an individual, so to speak.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) is perhaps not familiar with the Act that his Government left on the Statute-book. The Post Office Act already vests in the Postmaster General power to vary, reduce or increase the rates on all mailable matter, with the exception of letters and newspapers.

Mr. FOSTER. I am quite aware of that, but I am aware also that letters and newspapers, letters especially, are the things we are talking about.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. The principle is involved in section 9 of the Post Office Act, subsection E, which provides that the Postmaster General may, subject to the provision of the Act, establish rates of postage on all mailable matter, "not being letters, newspapers, or other thing herein-after specifically provided for." The Act specifies rates upon letters and upon newspapers, but I think these are the only rates that are fixed by the Act. As regards the enormous transactions, outside of these, covered by the Post Office Act, the Postmaster General has power to fix the rates.

Mr. HAGGART. That is only for postal conventions.

Mr. FOSTER. For parcel post.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I beg the hon. gentleman's pardon. This is altogether without reference to the postal conventions, and refers to domestic matters within our own control. And since that Act came into force—how long that may be I do not know, but for years I see the present Act is 38 Victoria—the Postmaster General has power to vary, reduce or increase the rates on parcels, and so on, thus affecting the revenue. The principle is embodied in the Act.

Mr. FOSTER. It may be in the Act, but that does not affect the argument I make. I do not think my hon. friend will say that in these matters that affects the revenue.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. This section that I have quoted affects the revenue.

Mr. FOSTER.

Mr. FOSTER. Yes, but not largely.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. Yes, largely.

Mr. FOSTER. Well, I am going on the general principle that in these matters which affect the revenue, the House and the country ought to know what it is doing.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. Why did you not repeal that clause when you were in power?

Mr. FOSTER. Does my hon. friend mean to say that because a thing has existed for a certain time it must exist for ever? When we find a certain state of things existing, then is the time when an opinion may be revised. I am not arguing this as affecting one party more than another. I am stating a principle which I think is sound, and I think my hon. friend (Mr. Mulock) must agree with me. Why should he, as Postmaster General, have power to vary the revenue of the country to the extent of \$100,000 or \$200,000 whenever he chooses to make a proclamation?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. Parliament has said so.

Mr. FOSTER. I cannot help that. Does the hon. gentleman (Mr. Mulock) think it good principle to embody in legislation?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) assented to it all the time he was in office.

Mr. FOSTER. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Mulock) assents to many things that he would not see carried out to the full extent. He has taken under his control the revenue of the post office. Under this Bill, whenever it pleases him, he can reduce the revenue by \$650,000 or \$700,000, whether the House thinks it a favourable moment to do so or not. I say that this is not a principle that should be carried out to any such extent.

Mr. HAGGART. The principal object the hon. gentleman (Mr. Mulock) has referred to was to allow changes with regard to parcel post with foreign countries. It is a necessary power for the Postmaster General to have.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I think the hon. gentleman is confusing this with section 29.

Mr. HAGGART. In order to make a postal convention affecting the parcel post between us and a foreign country, the Postmaster General must have jurisdiction over the parcel in its carriage in this country. If I remember rightly, when Postmaster General, I made an arrangement with Japan for the interchange of parcels. The hon. Postmaster General will notice that this does not apply to newspapers or letters, but simply allows the Postmaster General the right, which ordinarily he exercises by