Anno quarto

Georgii III. Regis.

CAP. XXIV.

An Act for preventing Frauds and Abuſes in relation to the ſending and receiving of Letters and Packets free from the Duty of Poſtage.

WHEREAS, under Colour of the Privilege of ſending and receiving Poſt Letters by Members of Parliament, free from the Duty of Poſtage, many great and notorious Frauds have been and ſtill are frequently practiſed, as well in derogation of the Honor of Parliament, as to the Detriment of the Public Revenue; divers Perſons having preſumed to counterfeit the Hand, and otherwiſe fraudulently to make uſe of the Names, of Members of Parliament, upon Letters and Packets to be ſent by the Poſt, in order to avoid the Payment of the Duty of Poſtage: And whereas the Allowance of ſending and receiving Letters and Packets free from the Duty of Poſtage, heretofore granted to, or cuſtomarily exerciſed by, certain Perſons not being Members of Parliament, in reſpect of their Offices, has not been ſufficiently confined to ſuch Letters and Packets only as relate to the Buſineſs of their reſpective Offices, and may therefore, if continued without further Reſtrictions and Limitations, be liable to great Abuſe: In order, therefore, to put the more effectual Stop to theſe and the like Frauds and Abuſes, and at the ſame Time to aſcertain, for the better Preamble.

Guidance and Direction of his Majesty's Post Master General, and the Officers to be employed under him, in the Performance of their Duty, by what Persons only, and under what Regulations or Restrictions; the Privilege or Allowance of sending and receiving Letters and Packets free from the Duty of Postage shall thenceforth be enjoyed and exercised, May it please Your Majesty that it may be enacted; and be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That from and after the First Day of May, One thousand seven hundred and sixty four, so long as the Revenue arising in the General Letter Office or Post Office, or Office of Post Master General, shall continue to be carried to, and made Part of the Aggregate Fund, no Letters or Packets sent by the Post, to or from any Place whatsoever, shall be exempted from paying the Duty of Postage, according to the Rates established by the several Acts of Parliament now in Force; other than and except such Letters and Packets as are herein after excepted, and in such Manner, and under such Restrictions, as are herein after declared and enacted concerning the same; that is to say, Except all such Letters and Packets as shall be sent from or to the King's most Excellent Majesty; all Letters and Packets, not exceeding the Weight of Two Ounces, sent from and to any Places (within the Kingdoms of Great Britain or Ireland) during the Sitting of any Session of Parliament, or within Forty Days before or Forty Days after any Summons or Prorogation of the same, which shall be signed, on the Outside thereof, by any Member of either of the Two Houses of Parliament of Great Britain, and whereof the Whole Superscription shall be of the Hand Writing of such Member, or which shall be directed to any Member of either House of the Parliament of Great Britain, at any of the Places of his usual Residence, or at the Place where he shall actually be at the Time of the Delivery thereof, or at the House of Parliament, or the Lobby of the House of Parliament of which he is a Member; all Letters and Packets, not exceeding the Weight of Two Ounces, sent from and to any Places within the Kingdom of Ireland, during the Sitting of any Session of Parliament of Ireland, or within Forty Days before or Forty Days after any Summons or Prorogation thereof, which shall be signed, on the Outside thereof, by any Member of either of the Two

From and after 1 *May*, 1764, while the Revenue of the Post Office shall continue to be carried to the Aggregate Fund,

no Letters or Packets shall be exempted from Postage, but such as shall be sent from or to the King;

and such, not exceeding two Ounces in Weight, as shall be sent during the Session of Parliament,

or within 40 Days before or after Summons or Prorogation,

and be signed on the Outside by a Member of either House,

and the Whole of the Superscription to be of such Member's Writing;

or, directed to a Member, at his usual Residence,

or Place where he shall then be,

or at the House, &c. of Parliament:

And in like Manner, Letters and Packets sent from and to Places in *Ireland*,

during the Session there,

or within 40 Days before or after Summons or Prorogation, signed and directed as aforesaid:

Two Houſes of the Parliament of Ireland, and whereof the Whole Superſcription ſhall be of the Hand Writing of ſuch Member, or which being ſent, during ſuch Time as aforeſaid, from any Part of Great Britain or Ireland to any Part of Ireland, ſhall be directed to any Member of either Houſe of the Parliament of Ireland, at any of the Places of his uſual Reſidence, or at the Place where he ſhall actually be at the Time of the Delivery thereof, or at the Houſe of Parliament, or the Lobby of the Houſe of Parliament of which he is a Member; all Letters and Packets directed to the Lord High Treaſurer, or Commiſſioners of the Treaſury, or the Secretaries to the Treaſury; to the Lord High Admiral, or Commiſſioners of the Admiralty, or the Secretaries of the Admiralty; to his Majeſty's Principal Secretaries of State, or their Under Secretaries; to the Commiſſioners for Trade and Plantations, or their Secretary; to his Majeſty's Secretary at War, or the Deputy Secretary at War; or to his Majeſty's Lieutenant General, or other Chief Governor or Governors of Ireland, and his or their Chief Secretary, his or their Secretary for the Provinces of Ulſter and Munſter in that Kingdom, his or their Secretary reſiding always in Great Britain, the Under Secretary and Firſt Clerk in the Office in Ireland of the ſaid Chief Secretary, the Firſt Clerk in the Office in Ireland of the ſaid Secretary for the Provinces of Ulſter and Munſter; or to his Majeſty's Poſtmaſter General, or to the Deputy of the Poſtmaſter General, for that Part of Great Britain called Scotland, for the Kingdom of Ireland, or for his Majeſty's Dominions in America reſpectively; or to the Secretary of ſuch Poſtmaſter General, or Deputy of the Poſtmaſter General, or to the Farmer of the Bye and Croſs Road Letters, or to any of the Surveyors of the Poſt Office, all for the time being; and all Letters and Packets ſent from any of the ſaid Officers for the time being, which ſhall be ſigned, on the Outſide thereof, by ſuch Officer, and whereof the Whole Superſcription ſhall likewiſe be of the Hand Writing of ſuch Officer; and alſo except all Letters and Packets ſent from the Treaſury, the Admiralty Office, the Office of his Majeſty's Principal Secretaries of State, the Plantation Office, the War Office, or from the General Poſt Office at London, or from any of the Chief Offices at Edinburgh, at Dublin, or in America, and which ſhall appear, by an Indorſement made thereupon by ſome Perſon properly authorized as herein after mentioned to make the ſame, to be upon his Majeſty's Service, and ſhall be ſealed

Alſo all Letters and Packets to the Lord High Treaſurer, or Commiſſioners, and Secretaries to the Treaſury;
Lord High Admiral, Commiſſioners and Secretaries to the Admiralty;
Principal Secretaries of State, and their Under Secretaries;
Commiſſioners for Trade and Plantations, or their Secretary;
Secretary at War, or his Deputy;
Lieutenant General, or other Chief Governor or Governors of *Ireland*;
or their Chief Secretary,
or Secretary for the Provinces of *Ulſter* and *Munſter*;
their Secretary reſiding in *Great Britain*;
the Under Secretary, and Firſt Clerk, in the Office in *Ireland* of the Chief Secretary,
and the Firſt Clerk in the Office of the Secretary for *Ulſter* and *Munſter*,
the Poſtmaſter General,
or Deputy for *Scotland*, *Ireland*, and *America*;
the Secretary, or Deputy of the Poſtmaſter General;
Farmer of the Bye and Croſs Road Letters;
Surveyors of the Poſt-Office;
and Letters and Packets ſent from any of the ſaid Officers, ſigned by them on the Outſide,
and the Whole Superſcription of their Writing;
and Letters and Packets from the Treaſury, Admiralty Office, Office of the Secretaries of State, Plantation Office, War Office, General Poſt Office at *London*, Chief Offices at *Edinburgh*, *Dublin*, and *America*, indorſed for the King's Service,

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and sealed with the Seal of Office, or of the Principal Officer in the Department.

sealed with the Seal of the Office, or with the Seal of the Principal Officer in the Office or Department from which they are sent.

And, for more effectually preventing all such Frauds and Abuses as might otherwise be practised under colour of the Allowance hereby granted and continued, of sending Letters and Packets from the several Offices and Officers herein before mentioned free from the Duty of Postage; be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That it shall and may be lawful for the Lord High Treasurer, or Commissioners of the Treasury, the Lord High Admiral, or Commissioners of the Admiralty, His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, His Majesty's Secretary at War, His Majesty's Postmaster General, and the Deputies of the Postmaster General herein before mentioned, all for the time being, to authorize and direct certain Persons in each of their Offices or Departments respectively, a List of whose Names shall be from time to time transmitted, by the Principal Officer or Officers authorizing the same, to the General Post Office in London, to make and subscribe an Indorsement upon each Letter or Packet which shall concern the publick Business of their respective Offices, signifying that such Letter or Packet is upon His Majesty's Service, and to seal the same with the Seal of such Office or Officer respectively; all which Persons are hereby strictly forbid so to indorse and seal any Letter or Packet whatsoever, unless such only concerning which they shall receive the special Direction of their superior Officer, or which they shall themselves know to concern the Business of their respective Offices; and if any Person employed in any of the said Offices, shall knowingly make and subscribe such Indorsement, or procure the same to be made upon any Letter or Packet which does not really concern the Business of the Office in respect of which he is authorized to make the same, he shall, for the First Offence, forfeit and pay the Sum of Five Pounds, to be recovered and applied in such Manner as, by the Act of the Ninth Year of the Reign of Queen Anne for establishing a General Post Office, is directed, with respect to the Penalties inflicted by the said Act; and, for the Second Offence, shall be dismissed from his Office.

Commissioners of the Treasury, and Admiralty, the Secretaries of State, Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, Secretary at War, Postmaster General, and his Deputies, impowered to authorize certain Persons in their respective Offices, of whom Lists to be transmitted to the General Post Office, *London*, to indorse the Letters and Packets upon the King's Service, and seal the same with the Seal of Office, *&c.* None to be so indorsed and sealed, but by Direction of their superior Officer, or which concerns the Business of the Office, on Forfeiture of 5 *l.* for the First Offence, to be recovered and applied as by Act 9 *Annæ* is directed, and for the Second Offence, the Offender to be dismissed,

Provided always, That the Number of Persons so to be appointed, in each of the Offices above mentioned, to make and subscribe such Indorsement as aforesaid, shall not exceed Two in any One Office or Department, except only in the Admiralty Office and the War

Persons appointed to make such Indorsements, not to exceed 2 in any Office, Admiralty and War Offices excepted;

War Office; and that the Number so to be appointed in the Admiralty Office shall not exceed Eight in Time of Peace, or Twelve in Time of War; and that the Number so to be appointed in the War Office shall not exceed Six in Time of Peace, or Ten in Time of War.

and in the Admiralty not to exceed 8 in Time of Peace, and 12 in Time of War; and in the War Office, not to exceed 6 in Time of Peace, and 10 in Time of War.

Provided also, and be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That in case any Person intitled to send Letters or Packets free of the Duty of Postage, being, by bodily Infirmity, disabled from writing the Whole Superscription of such Letters or Packets, shall chuse to authorize and appoint some One Person, on his Behalf, and in his Stead, to sign his Name upon, and write the Superscription of, such Letters and Packets, and shall cause Notice thereof in Writing, under his Hand and Seal, to be transmitted to his Majesty's Postmaster General, all Letters and Packets, so signed and superscribed by the Person so authorized and appointed, shall be allowed to pass free of the Duty of Postage, and shall, in all Respects, be proceeded with, as if the Whole Superscription had been of the Hand Writing of the Person by whom such Authority was given as aforesaid:

Where any privileged Person, disabled from writing the Whole Superscription, shall authorize some Person to sign his Name upon, and write the Superscription, and give Notice thereof under his Hand and Seal to the Postmaster General, Letters and Packets, so signed and superscribed, shall go free.

Provided always, and it is hereby further enacted, That nothing herein contained shall extend to charge with the Duty of Postage, any printed Votes, or Proceedings in Parliament, or printed News Papers, being sent without Covers, or in Covers open at the Sides, which shall be signed, on the Outside thereof, by the Hand of any Member of Parliament, in such Manner as hath been heretofore practised, or which shall be directed to any Member of Parliament, at any Place whereof he shall have given Notice in Writing to the Postmaster General, or to his Deputy at Edinburgh or Dublin respectively, but that all such Votes, Proceedings, and News Papers, so sent and signed or directed as aforesaid, shall be received free of the Duty of Postage; any thing in this or any former Act to the contrary notwithstanding.

Printed Votes, and Proceedings in Parliament, and News Papers, sent without Covers, or in Covers open at the Sides, and signed on the Outside by a Member, or directed to a Member, according to Notice given by him to the Postmaster General, or his Deputy at *Edinburgh* or *Dublin*, are to go free.

And forasmuch as it hath been usual for the Clerks in the Offices of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, and also for certain Officers in the Office of his Majesty's Postmaster General, to frank printed Votes, and Proceedings in Parliament, and printed News Papers, to be sent by the Post; be it therefore enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That it shall and may be lawful for such Clerks and Officers as aforesaid, being thereunto licensed by his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, or his Majesty's Postmaster General respectively,

Clerks in the Offices of the Secretaries of State, and Post Office, being duly licensed,

may continue to frank the Votes, and Proceedings in Parliament, and News Papers, as heretofore;

respectively, to continue to frank such printed Votes, and Proceedings in Parliament, and printed News Papers, in such Manner as they have heretofore been accustomed to frank the same; provided that such printed Votes, Proceedings, and News Papers, shall be sent without Covers, or in Covers open at the Sides.

sending the same without Covers, or in Covers open at the Sides.

Postmaster General, and Officers under him, may search any Packet sent without a Cover, or in a Cover open at the Sides;

And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That it shall and may be lawful for His Majesty's Postmaster General, or any of the Officers employed under him, to examine and search any Packet sent without a Cover, or in a Cover open at the Sides, in order to discover whether any other Paper or Thing whatsoever be inclosed or concealed in or with such printed Paper, as is hereby permitted to be sent free of Postage without a Cover, or in a Cover open at the Sides; and in case any such other Paper or Thing whatsoever shall be found to be inclosed or concealed in or with such printed Paper as aforesaid, or in case there shall be any Writing, other than the Superscription upon such printed Paper, or upon the Cover thereof, the Whole of such Packet shall be charged with the Duty of Postage, according to the Rates established by the several Acts of Parliament now in Force for that Purpose.

and if they shall find any other Paper or Thing inclosed therein,

or there shall be any Writing, other than the Superscription upon the printed Paper, or Cover,

the Whole of such Packet is to be charged with the Postage.

If any Person shall, after 1 *June*, 1764, counterfeit the Writing of any Person in the Superscription of any Letter or Packet, to avoid the Postage,

And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That if any Person shall, after the First Day of June, One thousand seven hundred and sixty four, counterfeit the Hand Writing of any Person whatsoever, in the Superscription of any Letter or Packet to be sent by the Post, in order to avoid the Payment of the Duty of Postage, every Person, so offending, shall be deemed guilty of Felony, and shall be transported for Seven Years.

he shall be adjudged of Felony, and be transported for 7 Years.

FINIS.