



Post Office Act 1953

1953 CHAPTER 36

General Offences

52 Stealing mail bag or postal packet

If any person—

- (a) steals a mail bag ;
- (b) steals any postal packet in course of transmission by post;
- (c) steals any chattel, money or valuable security out of a postal packet in course of transmission by post; or
- (d) stops a mail with intent to rob or search the mail,

he shall be guilty of felony and be liable to imprisonment for life or for any shorter term.

53 Unlawfully taking away or opening mail bag

If any person unlawfully takes away or opens a mail bag sent by any ship, vehicle or aircraft employed by or under the Post Office for the transmission of postal packets under contract, or unlawfully takes a postal packet in course of transmission by post out of a mail bag so sent, he shall be guilty of felony and be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years.

54 Receiver of stolen mail bag or postal packet

If any person receives any mail bag, or any postal packet or any chattel or money or valuable security, the stealing, taking, embezzling or secreting of which amounts to a felony under this Act, knowing it to have been so feloniously stolen, taken, embezzled or secreted, and to have been sent, or to have been intended to be sent, by post, he shall be guilty of felony and be liable to the same punishment as if he had himself stolen, taken, embezzled or secreted it, and may be proceeded against and convicted whether the principal offender has or has not been previously convicted or is or is not amenable to justice.

55 Fraudulent retention of mail bag or postal packet.

Any person who fraudulently retains, or wilfully secretes or keeps, or detains, or who, when required by an officer of the Post Office, neglects or refuses to deliver up—

- (a) any postal packet which is in course of transmission by post and which ought to have been delivered to any other person ; or
- (b) any postal packet in course of transmission by post or any mail bag which has been found by him or by any other person,

shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and be liable to a fine and to imprisonment.

56 Criminal diversion of letters from addressee.

- (1) If any person not in the employment of the Postmaster-General wilfully and maliciously, with intent to injure any other person, either opens or causes to be opened any postal packet which ought to have been delivered to that other person, or does any act or thing whereby the due delivery of the packet to that other person is prevented or impeded, he shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and be liable to a fine not exceeding fifty pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months.
- (2) Nothing in this section shall apply to a person who does any act to which this section applies where he is parent, or in the position of parent or guardian, of the person to whom the postal packet is addressed.
- (3) A prosecution shall not be instituted in pursuance of this section in England or Wales except by the direction or with the consent of the Postmaster-General.
- (4) In this section the expression " postal packet" means a postal packet which is in course of transmission by post or which has been delivered by post.

57 Stealing, embezzlement, destruction, etc., by officer of Post Office of postal packet

If any officer of the Post Office steals, or for any purpose whatever embezzles, secretes or destroys, a postal packet in course of transmission by post, he shall be guilty of felony and be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years or, if the postal packet contains any chattel, money or valuable security, to imprisonment for life or for any shorter term.

58 Opening or delaying of postal packets by officers of the Post Office

- (1) If any officer of the Post Office, contrary to his duty, opens, or procures or suffers to be opened, any postal packet in course of transmission by post, or wilfully detains or delays, or procures or suffers to be detained or delayed, any such postal packet, he shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and be liable to imprisonment or to a fine, or to both:

Provided that nothing in this section shall extend to the opening, detaining or delaying of a postal packet returned for want of a true direction, or returned by reason that the person to whom it is directed has refused it, or has refused or neglected to pay the postage thereof, or that the packet cannot for any other reason be delivered, or to the opening, detaining or delaying of a postal packet under the authority of this Act or in obedience to an express warrant in writing under the hand of a Secretary of State.

- (2) In the application of the foregoing subsection to Northern Ireland, for the reference to a Secretary of State there shall be substituted a reference to the Governor of Northern

Ireland ; and in the application of that subsection to the Isle of Man, for the reference to a warrant in writing under the hand of a Secretary of State there shall be substituted a reference to a warrant in writing under the hand of the Lieutenant-Governor issued with the sanction of a Secretary of State.

59 Carelessness, negligence or misconduct of persons employed in carrying or delivering mail bags, postal packets, etc.

If any person employed to convey or deliver a mail bag, or a postal packet in course of transmission by post, or to perform any other duty in respect of a mail bag or such a postal packet—

- (a) without authority whilst so employed, or whilst the mail bag or postal packet is in his custody or possession, leaves it, or suffers any person, not being the person in charge thereof, to ride in the place appointed for the person in charge thereof in or upon any vehicle used for the conveyance thereof, or to ride in or upon a vehicle so used and not licensed to carry passengers, or upon a horse used for the conveyance on horseback thereof;
- (b) is guilty of any act of drunkenness whilst so employed ;
- (c) is guilty of carelessness, negligence or other misconduct whereby the safety of the mail bag or postal packet is endangered;
- (d) without authority collects, receives, conveys or delivers a postal packet otherwise than in the ordinary course of post;
- (e) gives any false information of an assault or attempt at robbery upon him ; or
- (f) loiters on the road or passage, or wilfully misspends his time so as to retard the progress or delay the arrival of a mail bag or postal packet in the course of transmission by post, or does not use due care and diligence safely to convey a mail bag or postal packet at the due rate of speed,

he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding twenty pounds.

60 Prohibition of placing injurious substances in or against post office letter boxes or telephone kiosks

- (1) A person shall not place or attempt to place in or against any post office letter box or telephone kiosk or cabinet any fire, match, light, explosive substance, dangerous substance, filth, noxious or deleterious substance, or fluid, and shall not commit a nuisance in or against any post office letter box or telephone kiosk or cabinet, and shall not do or attempt to do anything likely to injure the box, kiosk or cabinet or its appurtenances or contents.
- (2) If any person acts in contravention of this section, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding ten pounds, or on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months.

61 Prohibition of affixing placards, notices, etc., on post office letter boxes, etc.

- (1) A person shall not without due authority affix or attempt to affix any placard, advertisement, notice, list, document, board or thing in or on, or paint or tar, any post office, post office letter box, telegraph post or other property belonging to or used by or on behalf of the Postmaster-General, and shall not in any way disfigure any such office, box, post or property.

Status: This is the original version (as it was originally enacted).

- (2) If any person acts in contravention of this section, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding forty shillings.

62 Prohibition of imitation of post office stamps, envelopes, forms and marks

- (1) A person shall not without due authority—
- (a) make, issue, or send by post or otherwise any envelope, wrapper, card, form or paper in imitation of one issued by or under the authority of the Postmaster-General or of any other postal administration, or having thereon any words, letters or marks which signify or imply or may reasonably lead the recipient thereof to believe that a postal packet bearing them is sent on Her Majesty's service;
 - (b) make on any envelope, wrapper, card, form or paper for the purpose of being issued or sent by post or otherwise, or otherwise used, any mark in imitation of or similar to or purporting to be any stamp or mark of any post office under the Postmaster-General or under any other postal administration, or any words, letters or marks which signify or imply or may reasonably lead the recipient thereof to believe that a postal packet bearing them is sent on Her Majesty's service; or
 - (c) issue or send by post or otherwise any envelope, wrapper, card, form or paper so marked.
- (2) If any person acts in contravention of this section, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding forty shillings.

63 Prohibition of fictitious stamps

- (1) A person shall not, except for such purposes and subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by Post Office regulations—
- (a) make, knowingly utter, deal in or sell any fictitious stamp;
 - (b) have in his possession, unless he shows a lawful excuse, any fictitious stamp ;
or
 - (c) make or, unless he shows a lawful excuse, have in his possession any die, plate, instrument or materials for making any fictitious stamp.
- (2) A person shall not knowingly use for the purposes of the Post Office any fictitious stamp.
- (3) If any person acts in contravention of the foregoing provisions of this section, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding twenty pounds:
- Provided that, in England or Wales, a prosecution shall not be instituted under this subsection except by order of the Postmaster-General.
- (4) Any stamp, die, plate, instrument or materials found in the possession of any person in contravention of subsection (1) of this section may be seized and shall be forfeited.
- (5) The importation into the United Kingdom or the Isle of Man—
- (a) of any facsimile, imitation or representation, whether on paper or otherwise, of any stamp for denoting any rate of postage, whether of the British postal area or of any country outside that area; or

- (b) of any die, plate, instrument or materials for making such a facsimile, imitation or representation,
is hereby prohibited.
- (6) In this section the expression " fictitious stamp " means any facsimile, imitation or representation, whether on paper or otherwise, of any stamp for the time being authorised or required to be used for the purposes of the Post Office or of any stamp for denoting a current rate of postage of any country outside the British postal area.
- (7) Notwithstanding anything in section thirty-eight of the Interpretation Act, 1889 (which relates to the effect of repeal and re-enactment), any reference to section sixty-five of the Post Office Act, 1908, in, or in any regulations made under, any other enactment applying or adapting that section for the purposes of that enactment or of any such regulations shall, unless the contrary intention appears, be construed as a reference to the provisions of that section as originally enacted, being the provisions set out in the Second Schedule to this Act.

64 Prohibition of false notice as to reception of letters, etc.

- (1) A person shall not without the authority of the Postmaster-General place or maintain in or on any house, wall, door, window, box, post, pillar or other place belonging to him or under his control, any of the following words, letters or marks, that is to say—
- (a) the words " post office " or " postal telegraph office " or " public telephone call office " ;
 - (b) the words " letter box " accompanied with words, letters or marks which signify or imply or may reasonably lead the public to believe that it is a post office letter box; or
 - (c) any words, letters or marks which signify or imply or may reasonably lead the public to believe that any house or place is a post office, or a place where the public may make telephone calls, or that any box is a post office letter box ;
- and every person, when required by a notice given by the Postmaster-General to remove or efface any such words, letters or marks as aforesaid, or to remove or effectually close up any letter box belonging to him or under his control which has been a post office letter box, shall comply with the requirement.
- (2) A person shall not without the authority of the Postmaster-General—
- (a) place or maintain in or on any ship, vehicle, aircraft or premises belonging to him or under his control; or
 - (b) use in any document in relation to himself or any other person or in relation to any ship, vehicle, aircraft or premises,
the words " Royal Mail " or " Royal Air Mail " or any words, letters or marks which signify or imply or may reasonably lead the public to believe that the ship, vehicle, aircraft or premises is or are used by the Postmaster-General or with his authority for the purpose of collecting or conveying postal packets or that he or that other person is authorised by the Postmaster-General to collect or convey such packets; and every person when required by a notice given by the Postmaster-General to remove or efface or cease to use any such words, letters or marks as aforesaid shall comply with the requirement.
- (3) If any person acts in contravention of this section, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding forty shillings, and, if the offence is continued after

a previous conviction, to a fine not exceeding five shillings for every day during which the offence so continues.

65 Obstruction and molestation of officers of the Post Office

- (1) If any person wilfully obstructs or molests, or incites anyone to obstruct or molest, an officer of the Post Office in the execution of his duty, or whilst in any post office or within any premises belonging to any post office or used therewith obstructs the course of business of the Post Office, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding ten pounds, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month, or to both. .
- (2) Any officer of the Post Office may require any person guilty of any offence under this section to leave a post office or any such premises as aforesaid and, if the person so required refuses or fails to comply with the requirement, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a further fine not exceeding five pounds, and may be removed by any officer of the Post Office, and any constable shall on demand remove or assist in removing any such person.

66 Prohibition of sending offensive or false telephone messages or false telegrams, etc.

If any person—

- (a) sends any message by telephone which is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character ;
- (b) sends any message by telephone, or any telegram, which he knows to be false, for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to any other person ; or
- (c) persistently makes telephone calls without reasonable cause and for any such purpose as aforesaid,

he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding ten pounds, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month, or to both.

67 Provision against hawking opposite General Post Office

If any hawker, newsvendor, or idle or disorderly person stops or loiters on the flagway or pavement opposite the General Post Office in London, or in any part thereof, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five pounds.

68 Endeavouring to procure the commission of any felony or misdemeanour

If any person solicits or endeavours to procure any other person to commit an offence punishable on indictment under this Act, he shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.