

“ That the Agents-General be requested, in view of the early termination of the
 “ Postal Treaty of 1873 between the Imperial Government and the
 “ Colonies, to elicit from the Secretary of State for the Colonies the
 “ intentions of the Imperial Government in reference to the Suez, Pacific,
 “ and Torres Straits Mail Services.”

The Conference also discussed other questions on which no definite action was taken.

Attention is directed to the Appendix of Minutes of Proceedings, Report of Evidence taken, and Documents laid before the Conference.

J. F. BURNS, *New South Wales.*

CHARLES STUART MEIN, *Queensland.*

JAS. P. BOUCAUT,
 CHARLES TODD, } *South Australia.*

J. M. WILSON, *Tasmania.**

GRAHAM BERRY,
 H. CUTHBERT, } *Victoria.*

THOS. WEBB WARE,
Secretary.

Melbourne, 18th May 1878.

* Sir JAMES WILSON, on the part of the Government of Tasmania, and in the interests of that colony and of New Zealand, desires to place on record an expression of his regret that the Conference should have declined to entertain the suggestion that the cables which connect Tasmania and New Zealand with the continent should be dealt with as forming, with the lines of telegraph from Port Darwin to England, a common system of communication between Australasia and Europe.

The lines of telegraph which traverse the several territories of the continental colonies, with the exception of the direct line from the South Australia frontier to Port Darwin, constitute a means of communication, not only between the capitals of those colonies, but also between the numerous centres of population throughout their respective areas. They exist primarily for the convenience of the domestic communities which they traverse.

That they connect Melbourne and Sydney with the cables that connect Australia with Europe is a mere accidental circumstance, which cannot divest them of what may be called their purely municipal character.

The cables between New South Wales and New Zealand, and between Tasmania and Victoria, occupy a very different position. They exist for the mutual advantage of the communities which they connect. They possess, so to speak, an international, as distinguished from a municipal, character.

It will scarcely be denied that such large communities as New South Wales and Victoria derive considerable advantage from the existence of a means of rapid communication with such colonies as New Zealand and Tasmania, which constitute ready and convenient markets for their respective productions, and with which they are intimately connected by social as well as by commercial ties.

New South Wales has recognised this principle by contributing to the maintenance of the New Zealand cable. But the Bass' Straits cable owes its existence to the enterprise of Tasmania, and was laid down, and is, and always has been, maintained at the sole cost of that colony. The time would seem to have arrived when mutual advantage should command reciprocal aid.

Naturally, in the first instance, the remote and outlying members of such a group of colonies as that which comprises Continental Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand, feeling their practical isolation, provide, at their own risk, the means of telegraphic intercourse with their wealthier and more populous neighbors. But those neighbors soon come to derive fully as much benefit from the connection as the originators of the means of intercourse. And it then becomes a simple matter of equity and fairness that what benefits each should be supported by both.

In other matters of a common intercolonial interest it has happened, before now, that one colony has undertaken the initiative in costly public works which primarily and immediately concern itself, but which incidentally, and even directly, prove beneficial to those who have borne no share in their construction.