

COMPARATIVE RETURN of OFFICERS of the POST OFFICE and TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT for the Years 1892 and 1891.

	1892.	1891.		1892.	1891
Postmaster-General .. .. .	1	1	Sorters in Clearing-room .. ..	13	14
Superintendent .. .. .	1	1	Storekeeper and Assistants .. ..	5	5
Secretary .. .. .	1	1	Chief Postmasters .. ..	16	16
Inspector of Post-offices .. ..	1	1	Postmasters and Officers in Charge on Permanent Staff .. ..	266	248
Assistant Inspector of Post-offices .. ..	1	1	Clerks and Cadets in Post-offices .. ..	283	242
Sub-Inspectors of Post-offices .. ..	2	..	Operators (including Cadets in Telegraph offices) .. ..	371	372
Controller of Money-orders and Savings-banks and Accountant .. .. .	1	1	Country Postmasters and Telephonists .. ..	1,049	1,012
Telegraph Inspectors .. .. .	3	3	Letter-carriers .. ..	129	119
Telegraph Sub-Inspectors .. ..	2	2	Messengers (Post Office) .. ..	19	19
Electrician .. .. .	1	1	Linemen .. ..	52	51
Mechanicians and Cadet .. .. .	4	4	Telegraph Message Boys .. ..	202	204
Clerks in General Post Office—			Nightwatchmen .. ..	2	2
Secretary's Branch .. .. .	8	8			
Dead-letter Branch .. .. .	5	4	Totals .. ..	2,458	2,349
Money-order and Savings-bank Branch .. ..	20	17			

The report of the proceedings of the Postal and Telegraph Conference, held at Brisbane in March last, has been laid before Parliament.

The business transacted was important, and among the principal resolutions adopted were the following:—

“That in the opinion of this Conference one representative should be sent from Australasia on behalf of all the colonies to represent them at the Postal Union Congress.

“That, in view of the necessity for speedy and regular communication between the United Kingdom and Australasia, this Conference is of opinion that the system of subsidies should be continued, and the mail service maintained by the United Kingdom and the colonies as at present. That the London Post Office be invited to call for tenders in Great Britain and Australasia for a weekly service, on conditions approved by the colonies, from *bona fide* British companies (to be performed by one or more companies running on alternate weeks as at present). Before any tenders are accepted, it be a request that they be submitted to the colonies for approval. [This refers to the Suez service, to which this colony declined to be a party. The contracts expire in January, 1895.]

“That this Conference considers it desirable to negotiate for a Canadian-Pacific Postal service.

“That this Conference directs that a communication be sent to the Postmaster-General, Washington, regretting the continued non-participation of the United States in the matter of the subsidy to the present San Francisco mail service, and also directs his attention to the excessive overland transit-rates between San Francisco and New York, and respectfully requests him to urge the Pacific Railway Company to give more favourable terms.

“That this Conference does not consider it desirable, after the recent arrangement as to rates, to give notice to the Eastern Extension Cable Company to terminate the existing guarantee.

“That it is the opinion of this Conference that the time has arrived when a second cable route should be established *via* the Pacific to Vancouver, touching at such places *en route* as may be hereafter agreed upon.

“That it is desirable in the interests of the public that the hour-zone system should be adopted in a modified form, so that there should be one time throughout Australia—namely, that on the 135th meridian, or nine hours east of Greenwich.” [New Zealand has since declined to give effect to the resolution.]

With reference to the Pacific cable question, it should be stated that a French company—the Société Française des Télégraphes Sous-Marins—under contract with the French Government, is about to lay a cable between Queensland and New Caledonia, and that the Governments of New South Wales and Queensland have each guaranteed £2,000 and the French Government £8,000 per annum for thirty years towards the cost and working-expenses of the cable. The company desires to make this the first link of a through Pacific cable to Vancouver; but the general feeling of the colonies and of others equally interested is that any Pacific-cable scheme should not be controlled by a foreign power or company, and should as far as practicable avoid passing through foreign territory. Correspondence in reference to the New Caledonia cable will be found in the cable papers F.-5. Under the original proposals of the Pacific Telegraph Cable Company the route indicated for the Pacific cable was—Queensland to a point near the North Cape of New Zealand; thence to Fiji, Fanning Island, Sandwich Islands, and Vancouver. If, however, the New Caledonia route is adopted, the cable would not be landed at New Zealand, and this would render the service of little direct advantage to the colony. The resolution of the Conference will probably hurry on the Pacific-cable question, inasmuch as the colonies hitherto have been by no means unanimous as to the need for an alternative cable service by way of the Pacific, a circumstance which deterred the original promoters from taking practical action.

Many other matters relating to the improvement of the post-office and telegraph services were dealt with by the Conference, including the adoption of uniform rates and regulations applicable to the whole of Australasia. This department, however, has been unable to give effect to the Conference decisions as a whole, as many of the proposals and conditions affecting the public are not so liberal as those already in force in this colony. It was unanimously decided that the next Conference should meet in New Zealand.

The reduced telegraph cable rates could not be brought into operation until the 1st of January last.

In August, last year, representatives from the Colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia met in Melbourne to consider the question of cable rates, and the proposals which had been made by this colony to join in the cable-guarantee, conditionally on the contributing colonies