

the United Kingdom, leaving the rate from the colonies as at present, this Conference, while recognising the desirableness of adopting the lowest possible rate, desires to express the opinion that the heavy cost of providing speedy and regular communication does not admit of any further reduction being made at the present time, the reduction to 2½d. in 1891 having resulted in an annual loss to the colonies of about £40,000, and that the partial reduction proposed—namely, in the rate from Great Britain—would be most undesirable, as such a measure would compel the colonies to reduce their inland and intercolonial rates from 2d. to 1d., involving a probable loss to them of a quarter of a million per annum, in addition to that already mentioned as the result of the reduction to 2½d., and that a copy of the foregoing be transmitted to the Imperial Government.

Paragraph as amended agreed to.

Hon. Mr WARD (New Zealand) I will see that the resolution is cabled to-day

Subject 43 Circulars sent in bulk to Sydney for posting to New Zealand. Read and agreed to.

Subject 44 Remitting through Treasury Department. Read and agreed to.

Subject 45 Redirection, That the procedure of the British Post Office be adopted in regard to charge for Read and agreed to.

Subject 46 As to delay in international messages in consequence of interruptions in international lines.

The paragraph relating thereto having been read,—

Hon. Mr WYNNE (Victoria) said,—I think if there had been no great delay in matters of this kind you would not have had the Chambers of Commerce complaining. It seems to me that the messages for the Press are of greater importance than private ones. The Press publishes the news for the whole of the colonies; persons resident in the colonies obtain the news from Europe through the Press. There are very few people who receive these private messages, and to my mind it is of greater importance that the Press should have precedence than private people. And, if it is thought absolutely necessary, I would suggest that 8 o'clock be altered to 6 o'clock. If the public want it during the day-time let them have it up to 6 o'clock, and after 6 let precedence be given to Press messages. That will allow of their being got through in time for the morning's publication. The matter is not in favour of the Press having precedence over private individuals, but so many more are benefited by the Press obtaining the news than the few I think we ought to consider very carefully whether we make any recommendation.

Hon. Mr PARKER (Western Australia) I should have no objection to seconding the suggestion that the hour be 6 instead of 8.

Hon. Mr WYNNE (Victoria) moved, and the Hon. Mr PARKER (Western Australia) seconded, That the hour of 8 be struck out, and 6 substituted.

Hon. Mr KIDD (New South Wales) Mr Lambton thinks we must not forget that the Press messages are taken at a reduced rate. Press messages are transmitted at 1s. 10d. and private ones at 4s. 9d. I should think it would be the other way about.

Hon. Mr WYNNE (Victoria) It means that twenty-four hours is lost. That is something to the Press, but it does not mean so much to private individuals.

Hon. Mr KIDD (New South Wales) What they object to is to be tied down. Let them judge whether they can get Press messages through in a reasonable time, and not give precedence to Press messages. Private messages can be sent through in a few minutes, while Press messages are lengthy.

Hon. Mr WYNNE (Victoria) Suppose we strike out the whole clause, and let it go as at present

Hon. Mr KIDD (New South Wales) It is better not to hamper the officers of the department. They use their own judgment, in the public interest. They are as anxious to get their messages through as the Chambers of Commerce.

Hon. Mr WYNNE (Victoria) If we adopt this recommendation, the telegraph company will pay attention to it. If it is desirable to adopt it, I think 6 o'clock is quite early enough. Otherwise strike the clause out altogether, and let them make their own arrangements.

Hon. Mr WARD (New Zealand) I may perhaps say, for the information of the Conference, that the rule we have is that such telegrams shall not interfere with the transmission of the ordinary telegraph traffic [rule read] That is the system we carry out, and we find it is satisfactory

Hon. Mr KIDD (New South Wales) That refers to offices in your own colony

Hon. Mr WARD (New Zealand) No, it refers also to cables. I would rather agree to that, or something of that character. I think, if private parties come to the office and pay full rates, they are entitled to consideration. The officials are anxious to get Press messages through, and give every possible assistance, but I do not think private messages should be crushed entirely on one side.

Hon. Mr WILSON (Queensland) I think it would be better to withdraw it. By having a hard-and-fast rule of this kind you give an opportunity for parties to insist upon certain things being done. As far as Queensland is concerned, we have no difficulty whatever. We have no rule upon the subject, and we have no complaint. I would very much prefer to see the clause struck out.

Ordered that the paragraph be struck out.

#### AUSTRALASIAN POSTAL CONVENTION.

The Conference then considered the draft of Australasian Postal Convention submitted by the heads of departments. (Appendix C, p. xv.)

Article 1 read and agreed to.

On Article 2 being read,

Hon. Mr WARD (New Zealand) said,—In connection with Article 2, New Zealand cannot agree to one or two suggestions here. Perhaps if I have the dissent recorded it will be satisfactory to the Conference.

Hon. Dr. COCKBURN (South Australia) Is there any new matter here?

Mr LAMBTON (New South Wales): Letter-cards.

Hon. Dr. COCKBURN (South Australia) But we have carried letter-cards already

Hon. Mr WARD (New Zealand) Our rates are lower for books and higher for newspapers at the present time. I am sorry we cannot subscribe to the proposal here, we may do it later on.