

It was decided at the Conference to combine the International Radio-telegraph and International Telegraph Conventions in a single Convention, to be known as "The International Telecommunications Convention."

New Zealand was represented at Madrid by Mr. M. B. Esson, the Dominion's representative on the Advisory Committee of Imperial and International Communications, Ltd., London.

ALTERATION IN RATE FOR CABLE MESSAGES TO AUSTRALIA AND SUVA.

Consequent upon the decision of the Madrid Telegraph Conference to increase (from twenty to twenty-five) the minimum number of chargeable words in daily-letter and night-letter cable messages, the rate for night-letter messages to Australia and Suva (Fiji) was altered as under from the 1st April:—

Australia—

From 3s. for 20 words and 2d. each additional word . . . To 3s. 9d. for 25 words and 2d. each additional word.

Suva (Fiji)—

From 5s. 10d. for 20 words and 3½d. each additional word . . . To 6s. 3d. for 25 words and 3d. each additional word.

CLOSING OF WELLINGTON CABLE STATION.

As a result of the merging (in the company known as Imperial and International Communications, Ltd.) of the interests of the Eastern Extension Australasia and China Telegraph Co., the Pacific Cable Board, and other Empire communications organizations, the Wellington station of the Eastern Extension Australasia and China Telegraph Co. was closed on the 31st May. From that date all cable traffic to and from New Zealand has been handled by the Auckland station of the Pacific Cable Board, associated with Imperial and International Communications, Ltd.

The closing of the Wellington cable station is an event of importance in the history of telegraph communication between New Zealand and the outer world. It is interesting to note that, prior to the year 1876, New Zealand had no outward means of telegraph communication; but following negotiations between the New Zealand Government and the Eastern Extension Australasia and China Telegraph Co., Ltd., a cable connecting New Zealand with Australia was opened for business on the 21st February, 1876. This cable was laid from La Perouse, in New South Wales, to Wakapuaka, near Nelson, which was established as the terminal station in New Zealand of the company. When the service commenced the charge for messages to the United Kingdom was 11s. 4d. a word, and there were no cheap rates. To-day the full-rate charge is 1s. 8d. a word, with much reduced charges for other classes of messages.

In 1889 the business of the colony had so far developed as to warrant the company in duplicating the single cable. This work was completed in May, 1890. It was not until 1902 that the Pacific Cable commenced to operate from New Zealand.

The situation at Wakapuaka of the terminal station of the Eastern Cable involved a good deal of transmission, and in 1917 the company found it expedient to transfer the terminal station to Wellington.

The closing of the station and the concentration of all cable traffic at Auckland obviates the need for the maintenance of two sets of cable staffs. The change has proved satisfactory to the Department. Adequate arrangements have been made for the expeditious handling of cable traffic to and from all parts of New Zealand.

While the severance of relations between the pioneer cable concern and the Department is to be regretted, it is recognized that the organization still has a world-wide function, although now merged in the wider Imperial combination of cable interests. The relations existing between the company and the Department were always of a most harmonious nature; and it is acknowledged that the company was ever ready to co-operate and to assist in meeting any emergency.

MAINTENANCE OF TELEGRAPH AND TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION.

It is again pleasing to report that, due to sound construction methods and to efficient organization, the Department has been able to maintain, often under adverse conditions, a high standard of telegraph and telephone service throughout the Dominion.

The elements of nature caused major disruption of service on a number of occasions, but the prompt and effective steps taken to restore communication resulted in a minimum of inconvenience to the public and the smallest possible loss of revenue to the Department. It is of interest to record that major disruptions of service due to storms were confined to the Auckland, Wellington, and Canterbury Districts—Otago and Southland apparently escaping the severe weather experienced in other parts of the Dominion.

A fairly severe earthquake was experienced in the Wairoa district at about 1.25 a.m. on the 16th September. As a result of the visitation, telegraph communication between Napier and Gisborne was severed for some hours, but the two offices mentioned established two-way communication early per medium of the emergency radio sets that were installed following the Hawke's Bay earthquake of 1931. The most serious feature of the earthquake was that service to 450 subscribers connected with the Wairoa exchange was interrupted, due to damage to the old bridge across the Wairoa River, which accommodated the lines in question.