

236. Are there not a great many press messages received in Melbourne and sent to newspapers in Sydney, and Tasmania, and New Zealand?—Yes; and messages are received in Singapore and split up, and the Australian portion of them sent from there; that is a very common practice.

237. *By the Chairman.*—I will put it in another way: the point that Mr. Burns wishes to arrive at is this, whether the return as to the number of messages and the number of words proceeding from the respective colonies is a clear indication of the business which that particular colony does through the cable—supposing a correct return of such a kind were given?—If a correct return were given, showing the messages transmitted from one colony through the cable and the return to that colony through the cable, from independent sources, it would be a correct measure; but it would not be a correct measure to say that messages received in this colony and re-transmitted were set forth.

238. We know very well that that would not be fair; but does it exist within your knowledge to any extent—are the returns that you would give as to the number of messages sent from Melbourne vitiated to any extent by the fact that while the messages start from Melbourne they are sent as it were and paid for by the residents of other colonies?—No; I do not think that to any serious extent it would be so.

239. *By Mr. Burns.*—Is it a fact that there are press agencies which receive telegrams from England and have agents in Melbourne who re-transmit from those telegrams, say from a single message, telegrams to all the other colonies, New South Wales, Tasmania, Queensland, and New Zealand?—Yes, there are agencies of that sort in Melbourne.

240. So that in that way the business of the Victorian colony by cable is made to appear larger than it really is?—If it were done to any great extent of course it would be so; but I question if it is done to an extent sufficiently large to magnify the number of messages sent, appreciably. It might, I dare say, be very easily ascertained by keeping a record of those re-transmitted messages, because it is very well known that the re-transmitted message comes from a local source.

241. Is it not a fact that you have a large business between this and other colonies by reason of cable messages received for the first time in Melbourne?—I should be sorry to say that that business is large, such a business is certainly done, but I should be sorry to say it is large.

242. *By the Chairman.*—If a message arrived in Melbourne for the *Argus*, for instance, concerning which there was an understanding between the *Argus* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* that they were to publish simultaneously, and they joined in the message, would no message be sent direct to both offices—would the message be repeated to both offices?—Repeated to both offices frequently.

243. Both colonies would get the credit of it?—Yes.

244. *By Mr. Burns.*—Both parties would not get the cable message?—No; the splitting the message would most likely occur at Adelaide—sent from Adelaide to Melbourne and to Sydney.

245. *By the Chairman.*—South Australia would get the advantage, and not Melbourne?—Just so.

246. *By Sir James Wilson.*—If the Associated Press sent a message would it be credited only to one colony, and the rest omitted per cable?—The colony in which it was received by the agent.

247. That is the case?—Yes.

248. So that the colony which sent it would be credited for the whole affair, though it had to be distributed amongst the others?—Yes, but only for a single transmission per cable.

249. *By Mr. Mein.*—You simply referred to duplication between Port Darwin and Singapore by cable; do you think the duplication to the colonies would be complete, independent of a second land line?—A second land line—do you mean from—

250. Say from Port Darwin. Do you consider that there is duplication with England by simply duplicating the cable from Singapore to Port Darwin?—The duplication would be very much less perfect than if we had a duplication by land as well. I have given much consideration to that; and I have thought for many years that it would be desirable to have duplication by land. That would be only done by connecting the extreme northern lines of Queensland with the present line to Port Darwin, at some convenient point in the interior; it would be a great advantage, and it could be conveniently done. If there were any interruption upon the overland line the colonies could send by Queensland; and if the line by Normantown, the connecting line, was broken, they could use the other line. That would be a duplication within Australia.

251. *By the Chairman.*—Is there sufficient traffic to justify duplication of that kind?—There is no traffic to justify duplication at all at present, if you come to that, because the present cable could do all the work in two hours a day.

252. *By Mr. Mein.*—So could the cable if it were not interrupted, but it is frequently interrupted?—A duplication by land would be a great advantage.

253. *By Mr. Cuthbert.*—Would it be very expensive?—That would depend whether it was done by land or sea. The original proposition was to take the line by land to Normantown, the northernmost station in Queensland. That was very expensive then.

254. *By Mr. Mein.*—As a matter of fact was not the original proposal for telegraphic communication with England by way of Queensland?—I understood Captain Osborne to that effect.

255. Is it not a fact that the Queensland line to the north of the Norman River was constructed with an understanding to that effect?—I could not say that I am personally aware to that effect, but I believe from official returns and papers that I have read that the lines were constructed with a view to ultimately connect with the cable. I do not know that I would be justified in saying that they were constructed from anything that transpired on behalf of Captain Osborn. He undoubtedly proposed to construct a land line from Port Darwin to the nearest station in Queensland, and that would give color to what took place subsequently.

256. *By Mr. Cuthbert.*—Could you prepare an estimate of what would be the cost of completing the line from Normantown to Port Darwin?—It would not require to go all the way to Port Darwin. It would go to the nearest point of the trunk line, the main overland line.

257. *By Mr. Burns.*—About 300 miles from Port Darwin?—Yes, speaking in round numbers. I do not think that the expense should exceed £60,000, with iron poles, to carry a line from Normantown to the nearest point of the main trunk line. That ought to about cover it. It ought to come near it. I do not think it would exceed that, from my recollection of the distance and the cost of erecting lines in Northern Queensland. The northern line there I do not think exceeded £55 a mile, using wooden poles.