

last to examine the laws already passed by certain of the signatory Powers, and to consider the date at which the Convention should come into operation, but decided to adjourn to the 1st July next, when the matter will be further considered.

I take this opportunity to transmit to you the accompanying copies of "The Submarine Telegraph Act, 1886," amending "The Submarine Telegraph Act, 1885."

I have, &c.,

H. T. HOLLAND.

The Officer Administering the Government of New Zealand.

Enclosure 1.

SIR,—

Foreign Office, 28th September, 1886.

With reference to previous correspondence respecting the Submarine Telegraphs Convention of the 14th March, 1884, I am now directed by the Earl of Iddesleigh to request that you will inform Mr. Secretary Stanhope that the Submarine Telegraph Act (1885) Amendment Bill has received the Royal assent.

Her Majesty's Government are therefore in a position to give effect to the declaration drawn up at the Conference which met at Paris last May. A copy of this document accompanied the letter from this office of the 4th of June last. The French Government have proposed that, after an examination of the further laws passed by the Legislatures of countries parties to the Convention of 1884, which will be communicated to the Conference when it reassembles on the 1st of December next, the list of these States shall then be definitely settled, and a decision come to respecting the position of States which are not at that date in a position to carry out the provisions of Article XII. of the Convention of 1884. When this preliminary business is disposed of, the Plenipotentiaries of the Powers will proceed to sign the declaration.

Lord Iddesleigh will be glad to learn whether the British colonies enumerated in the additional article to the Convention of 1884 accede to the Convention and to the declaration, and will be on the 1st December next in a position to give effect to the provisions of these engagements; and if they accede, but are not yet in a position to give effect to them, what statement is to be made with respect to each colony so circumstanced.

The Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office.

I have, &c.,

JAMES FERGUSSON.

Enclosure 2.

SIR,—

Colonial Office, Downing Street, 22nd October, 1886.

With reference to your letter of the 28th September, on the subject of the Submarine Telegraphs Convention, I am directed by Mr. Secretary Stanhope to state that the Colonies of Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland have, as the Earl of Iddesleigh is already aware, acceded to the Convention, but that they have not intimated their wishes with regard to the declaration of May last, nor have they yet been afforded sufficient time to do so. The remaining colonies mentioned in the additional article not having signified their accession to the Convention, no communication has been addressed to them with reference to the declaration; but Mr. Stanhope, being now informed that Her Majesty's Government are in a position to give effect to the declaration, will invite the Colonial Governments to furnish him with a definite answer as to their desire to accede both to the Convention and to the declaration. I am first to inquire whether Lord Iddesleigh concurs with Mr. Stanhope in considering that the effect of accession by a colony is (a) to make the Convention—Art. I.—operative outside the waters of the colony in respect of any cable which is landed upon the shores of that colony; and (b) to pledge the colony—Art. XII.—to pass any legislative measures which may be necessary to make the Convention operative within the waters of the colony. I am to add that no colony has yet legislated on the subject.

I have, &c.,

The Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office.

JOHN BRAMSTON.

Enclosure 3.

SUBMARINE TELEGRAPH DECLARATION.

CERTAIN doubts having been raised as to the meaning of the word "wilfully" used in Article II. of the Convention of the 14th March, 1884, it is understood that the provision in respect of penal responsibility contained in the said article does not apply to cases of breakage or injury caused accidentally or of necessity in the repair of a cable, when all precautions have been taken to avoid such breakage or injury. It is equally understood that Article IV. of the Convention had no other object, and is to have no other effect, than to empower the competent tribunals of each country to decide, in conformity with their laws and according to the circumstances, the question of the civil responsibility of the owner of a cable who in laying or repairing his own cable breaks or injures another cable, as well as the consequences of such responsibility if it is recognised as existing.