

The understanding thus arrived at was that, subject to the approval of the Congress, the Australian Colonies should be offered a single voice and a guarantee that the transit rates and the surtaxes should remain unchanged until after the next quinquennial Congress; and this understanding was eventually confirmed by the Congress, although, as far as the rates and surtaxes are concerned, the confirmation was scarcely necessary, inasmuch as the Congress decided, in view of the strong opposition of Great Britain, not to make any changes in the transit rates and surtaxes beyond the suppression of a practically disused surtax for letters subject to the sea transit rate of 5 francs per kilogramme. But before the question of the Australian Colonies came under review at the Congress an attempt was made (on the 21st February) to treat as one question the entry of Australia, that of the Cape Colony, and Natal, and the demand of Great Britain for a revision of votes in favour of those British colonies which are already in the Postal Union. The conjunction of the three questions I opposed successfully; but the committee insisted on making the award of an additional vote for the British colonies generally contingent upon the entry of the Cape and Natal into the Union, and in refusing the demand of the Cape for separate representation.

I mention these facts in order to show the great importance which the administration of the Union attach to a single voice in its affairs; and here it is right to recall that British India, like the Mother-country, has to content itself with one vote, notwithstanding the vastness of its area, population, and commerce, and the complexity and variety of its institutions; while for the Dominion of Canada a single vote was obtained in 1878 only by the Mother-country relinquishing the vote which had been attributed to her for the British colonies generally, and now that circumstances have changed, the most that Great Britain can hope to obtain for all her colonies, exclusive of Canada and Australasia, is a single vote. This being the case, there is no longer any ground for hoping that a separate vote for each Australian Colony will ever be conceded; and, so far as making conditions is concerned, there is no longer any object for those colonies to attain by postponing their entry. It can scarcely be doubted that, sooner or later, the Union will be completed by the adhesion of these important colonies, and the present opportunity seems to me to be as favourable as any that is ever likely to present itself.

I have, &c.,

H. BUXTON FORMAN.

To the Right Hon. G. J. Shaw-Lefevre, M.P., H.M. Postmaster-General.

*No. 13.—Paper submitted by the Postmaster-General of Queensland showing the History of Negotiations (in a condensed Form) with Queensland in reference to joining in the Subsidy to the Eastern Extension and China Telegraph Company's Cable.*

On the 14th September, 1876, the Executive Council of Queensland, in connection with correspondence received from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, on the subject of duplicating cable communication, passed a minute to the effect that "The Council are of opinion that the Government should not contribute to the construction of any duplicate cable between Singapore and Australia which is not directly connected with the telegraph lines of this colony, and is not independent of the control of the Eastern Extension and China Telegraph Company."

At the Sydney Postal Conference in January, 1877, motions were submitted by Queensland to the effect "That any duplicate system should be by a distinct route throughout from that now in use;" and, "That it is desirable that a submarine cable should be laid from Singapore to Cape York, in Queensland, the Government of that colony undertaking, in the event of such cable being laid, to connect their existing land lines therewith." But both motions were negatived.

At the Melbourne Postal Conference in May, 1878, a resolution was passed as follows: "That the Governments of New South Wales and Victoria be empowered to enter into an agreement and contract with the Eastern Extension and China Telegraph Company for a second cable from Singapore direct to Banjoewangie, avoiding the Java land lines, and thence direct to Port Darwin, for an annual subsidy of not exceeding £32,400."

Queensland's representative, who refrained from voting on this motion, proposed the following amendment: "That it is essential there should be a complete system of telegraphic communication between British India and the Continent of Australia unconnected with the existing lines of the Eastern Extension and China Telegraph Company, and under the control of an independent company or proprietary," which was negatived.

On the 4th December, 1878, the agreement for the construction of the second cable from Singapore direct to Banjoewangie, and then direct to Port Darwin, for an annual subsidy of £32,400, was entered into with the Eastern Extension and China Telegraph Company by Victoria and New South Wales, "on behalf of the Australian Colonies and New Zealand," and upon receipt of a copy of it, which was sent for the information of the Queensland Government, the Queensland Postmaster-General made the following minute: "I note that the agreement purports to have been made on behalf of the Australasian Colonies. The Governments of Victoria and New South Wales have no authority to bind this colony to any agreement, and, as we are in no way a party to the present one, and have not been in any way consulted as to its terms, some of which seem open to great objection, notice should be given that we do not confirm it in any way, and refuse to be bound by it." Victoria was advised in accordance with this minute.

In June, 1879, South Australia intimated that the reduction in rate of 50 per cent. on Government messages and 75 per cent. on Press messages, under the agreement, was applicable to those colonies only who contributed to the subsidy for the second cable, and asked if Queensland intended to so contribute. To this a reply was sent on the 16th of the same month, to the effect that this Government had decided not to contribute to the subsidy, and therefore could not expect to participate in the reduction.

On the 20th August, 1885, Victoria wired having received advice from its Agent-General, intimating that the Berlin Conference had practically arranged a reduction of cable rates, and urging Queensland and New Zealand to join in the subsidy, otherwise they would not share in the benefit.

On the 27th August, 1885, South Australia and Victoria respectively communicated with