

reduction of the cable rates between England and Australia, but I do most strenuously urge and hope that nothing will be done by the Conference that would impede or militate the proposed laying of the Pacific cable.

The Hon. F. T. Derham, Postmaster-General, Victoria.

I have, &c.,

AUDLEY COOTE.

No. 17.—*Memorandum on the Subject of Press Telegrams.* (Laid before the Conference by the Hon. John Gavan Duffy).

I RECENTLY apportioned the expenditure on account of telegraphs for 1889–90, and the sum which I estimate should be fairly charged, exclusive of the cost of construction of telegraph lines, the cable subsidies, and the interest on the capital, cost of works and buildings, is £184,923. The revenue for 1889–90 was £131,013, showing a deficiency of £53,910. The present Press rate of 3s. per hundred words to New South Wales and South Australia, and 4s. 6d. per hundred words to Queensland and West Australia, is not excessive. We have no separate records of Press business, and no statistical information is therefore available. The rates charged in the United Kingdom are special and by arrangement, and are not published for general information; but I believe a low rate is charged for a message addressed to several papers. I do not think the business would be increased to an appreciable extent by any reduction on the present rates.

24th February, 1891.

W. MARKHAM.

P.S.—I find that the annual amount paid by the *Argus* is £3,496; *Age*, £2,572; *Daily Telegraph*, £1,256; *Herald*, £1,440; *Standard*, £1,600.—W. M.

In view of the fact that the revenue of the Telegraph Department from all sources largely exceeds its expenditure, in our opinion, the time has fairly arrived when a reduction in the charges for Press messages may be taken into account. In Victoria, according to the last official report, the revenue for 1889 was £127,000, as against an expenditure of £28,000, inclusive of the cable subsidy.

Intercolonial Rates.—The charges at present levied by the department on intercolonial messages are excessive. The practice of the department is to charge at the hundred-word rate. Differential charges should be made, rated on the length of messages. If a reasonable charge were imposed for every twenty-five words, or fraction of twenty-five, sent over the wires, it would operate more fairly. An uniform rate for the whole of Australia ought to be levied. The principal business is carried on between Victoria and New South Wales and South Australia, and the heavy charge now imposed on messages to provinces beyond these spheres amount, practically, to prohibitive taxation. A fair rate would be 1s. 4d. per hundred words, or 4d. for twenty-five, throughout all the colonies. Uniformity and fair rates will, without question, speedily make up any deficiency caused by these reductions. The following are the differential rates charged for the first hundred words from Victoria: To New South Wales, 3s.; to Queensland, 4s. 6d.; to South Australia, 3s.; to Western Australia, 4s. 6d. To Queensland and Western Australia the charge amounts to over $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per word.

Intercolonial Cables.—The rates charged over the intercolonial cables demand some attention. The charge for Press messages to Tasmania of 4s. 6d. per hundred words might reasonably be reduced in consequence of the increase in communication now taking place. The charge for New Zealand messages is also too high. With the land charges the cost comes to £1 8s. 6d. from Victoria.

Eastern Cables.—A Press rate for communication to the East, to India, China, &c., should be established. The charge of 7s. 10d. per word now imposed is blocking an important news avenue.

Manifolding Messages.—The rates imposed by the Telegraph Departments for issuing duplicate or triplicate copies of cable messages in each province are too high. In case of two or more newspapers joining together in any colony a reasonable reduction ought to be made in the charges for issuing copies of the original telegram.

Delay of Messages.—The custom which seems to be observed of delaying Press messages until all private business, whether handed in after the Press telegrams or before, have been sent through is an injustice which presses with special weight upon the evening newspapers. While absolute precedence is not asked, they should be allowed to take their turn, and in important cases to receive precedence.

No. 18.—*Communication on the Subject of the Draft Agreement, from the Manager of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company.*

The Eastern Extension Australasian and China Telegraph Company (Limited),
Sydney, 9th March, 1891.

SIR,—

I have the honour to inform you that I telegraphed to the chairman of this company (Sir John Pender) the alterations made by the Conference in the agreement submitted by the company for a reduction of rates between Australia and Europe, and the following is his reply:—

“Arrangements with colonies was for a four-shilling rate *via* Suez and Teheran, and it was never intended to apply that rate to Hongkong and Moulemein, as those routes are beyond our control. Moreover, the out-payments in both cases exceed 4s., and India and Indo-European would not agree; impossible, therefore, to comply with Conference request. Contingency is, however, very remote, seeing that companies are now spending over a million sterling in putting down additional cables to make the service thoroughly strong at all points.

“I have carefully considered the proposed alterations in the agreement, and accept the changes in first three paragraphs of preamble.

“The figures in fifth paragraph and in Article 3 must, however, remain, as they represent the actual receipts of Extension Company and the administrations associated with it, in the guarantee arrangement for the year 1889, which was basis fixed by my letter to Agents-General of May last year. The difference between the figures in that letter and those in agreement is caused by Persian