

33. FUNCTIONS OF SECRETARIAL OFFICE IN REGARD TO POST AND TELEGRAPH CONVENTION.

We recommend that all replies to circulars from the Berne Office should be answered, as arranged, through the Postmaster-General of South Australia, who will endeavour to obtain unanimity of the various colonies before forwarding the decision to the Berne Office.

As regards Telegraph Convention, see 41.

Put and passed.

34. FRANKING.

No report to make.

34A. RE-DIRECTION.—UNIFORMITY OF CHARGES.

This matter was discussed at the Hobart Conference, when the following recommendation of the Heads of Departments was agreed to:—

“Item 19.—Re-direction Charge; also Charge for return of Dead Letters.

“We recommend the adoption of the Postal Union practice in its entirety—that is, to make no charge for re-direction if the article is fully prepaid to the country or colony to which it is re-directed. We are aware that under the existing Postal Laws of some of the Colonies the re-direction charge is compulsory, although inoperative as regards Foreign Countries.”

Put and passed.

34B. UNIFORMITY OF ACTION AS REGARDS ANSWERS TO BERNE CIRCULARS.

Dealt with above, under 33.

34C. SIMILARITY OF NAMES OF PLACES (POST OFFICES) IN DIFFERENT COLONIES.

Although we are alive to the inconveniences arising from similar names being given to places in various colonies, we see great difficulty in advising any change, but we are of opinion that the inconvenience would be materially lessened if the persons posting letters addressed to those places would be careful to insert the name of the colony. Care should be taken in future to avoid giving to places names which are already in use.

On the motion of the PRESIDENT, the report was adopted up to this point.

35. CYPHER MESSAGES.

(a) Mode of counting (definition).

In all cases where Messages contain cypher words we consider that the following rule agreed to at the Hobart Postal Conference in 1892 page 25, should be made universal throughout the colonies:—

“Every message consisting wholly or in part of words in secret language, or in words in any admitted language (English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, and Latin) having no connective meaning, groups of letters or figures, shall be regarded as a cypher message, and every cypher word in such message shall be counted as two words, and the extra charge be added to the minimum rate for a message: provided that such extra charge shall not in any case exceed 50 per cent. on the ordinary rate which would be payable on account of the said telegram. Groups of five letters or five figures shall count as one cypher word.”

(b) To New Zealand.

That the New Zealand Government be requested to negotiate with the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, with a view of placing the intercolonial business on the same footing as regards cypher messages as defined above.

The HON. J. G. WARD (N.Z.): As I understand this, anyone who sends a cypher message has to pay double rates.

MR. TODD (S.A.): It says “provided such extra charge shall not in any case exceed 50 per cent.,” so that if a message be all in cypher it will pay 50 per cent. extra.

The HON. J. G. WARD (N.Z.): I move the omission of paragraph (b). I do not know the reason for that recommendation; but if it is carried I shall recommend our Government to withdraw from that agreement altogether. I will not put our mercantile community in the position of subscribing to the guarantee, and then ask them to put their hands in their pockets and pay 50 per cent. more for cypher messages. The agreement we have made is satisfactory to our colony. The Eastern Extension Company receive a large amount of revenue, and if the New Zealand people have to subscribe 50 per cent. additional for cypher messages I undoubtedly protest against it. I think it is wrong and at variance with the agreement entered into by New Zealand with the other colonies. Moreover, I do not think the representatives of Victoria and New South Wales would advocate that the system should be applied to international cable messages. If not, why should they put in a recommendation asking New Zealand to apply it to intercolonial messages. Who is this proposal to benefit? Not any of the colonies, but the Eastern Extension Company alone. If the majority carry this proposal against me I accept the position, but I say deliberately we will carry out the arrangement I have agreed to as far as the renewal of the contract is concerned; but we will not continue on those conditions in the future, because it is unfair to our colony. It is a breach of the agreement we have entered into, and I am very much surprised that the recommendation has been made.

Mr. C. TODD (S.A.) also spoke.

The HON. A. WYNNE (V.): I cannot see that any sound reason has been given for the recommendation. It seems to me it will place New Zealand in a worse position than the other colonies. A statement has been made to me that it costs more to send a cypher message to Western Australia than

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