

Nos. 72, 73, and 81.—“Intercolonial Telegraph Rates.”—“Resolution of Conference Chambers of Commerce *re* Intercolonial Telegraph Charges.”—“Reduction of the New South Wales-Queensland Telegraph Rates, and alteration in mode of charging on Inland and Intercolonial Telegrams.”

The question of reducing the rates—2s. for the first 10 words, and 2d. each additional word—on telegrams between New South Wales and Queensland, has been under consideration on several occasions.

In 1885, a proposal was made to Queensland that the rates be reduced to those then, and now, existing between New South Wales and Victoria, viz., 1s. for the first 10 words, and 2d. for each additional word. A reply was received that, having regard to the long distances over which telegrams pass in Queensland, the Government of that Colony was not then disposed to make any reduction in the charges levied. In 1887 the attention of Queensland was again drawn to the matter, but a reply was received to the effect that, for the reasons already given, the Government of that Colony was “still unable to meet the wishes of the Government of New South Wales with regard to the proposed reduction.”

At a Conference held at Adelaide in 1890, a Resolution was agreed to, of which the following is an extract, viz. :—

“That, between any two contiguous Colonies, 1s. shall be the initial charge for 12 words, and 1½d. for each additional word ; names and addresses to be paid for.”

Owing to some of the Colonies not taking the necessary action, this Resolution was not given effect to, nor was a somewhat similar Resolution making the charge “between any two contiguous Colonies 1s. for 15 words, and 1½d. for each additional word, names and addresses to be paid for,” which was adopted at a Conference held at Sydney, 1891. A Resolution, similar in terms to the latter, was submitted for consideration at the 1892 (Hobart) Conference, but was rejected.

In 1896 the Chambers of Commerce in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide wrote to the New South Wales, Victorian, and South Australian Post and Telegraph Administrations, asking for the reduction of the Intercolonial telegraph rates. The Sydney Chamber of Commerce asked that, after the first ten words, the charge on messages between New South Wales and Victoria be reduced from 2d. to 1d. per word. The Melbourne Chamber of Commerce made a similar request with respect to messages from Victoria to New South Wales, besides asking that consideration be given to the existing rates on messages between Victoria and South Australia. The Adelaide Chamber of Commerce also asked for a reduction.

The matter was considered at the 1896 (Sydney) Conference, when the Permanent Heads reported as follows :—

“We refrain from making any recommendation. We would, however, suggest for the consideration of Ministers that, in the event of an alteration of the rates being made, it should be *on the basis of the International principle of counting addresses and signatures*, as recommended at the Conferences held at Adelaide and Sydney in 1890 and 1891 respectively.”

In December, 1897, the Brisbane office opened up a correspondence with the Sydney office on the question of reducing the rates on telegrams to and from New South Wales and Queensland. The proposal of Queensland was to charge 1s. for 12 words, *including address and signature*, and 1½d. for each additional word. To this proposal New South Wales could not agree, because of the anomaly which would be created, and owing to it being thought that the charges on messages between New South Wales and Victoria, and New South Wales and Queensland, should be as nearly uniform as possible, whereas were the Queensland proposal adopted the following would be the position :—

New South Wales to Queensland.—1s. for the first 12 words (at least six of which would be address and signature), and 1½d. for each additional word.

New South Wales to Victoria.—1s. for the first 10 words (exclusive of address and signature), and 2d. for each additional word.

Queensland was informed that if it would agree to the addresses being sent free, and to charge 1s. for the first 10 words and 2d. for each additional word, New South Wales would be prepared to consider the matter. The question still remained unsettled, but, in a letter explaining the reasons which guided Queensland in making the above-mentioned proposal, the Brisbane Office states that “*it has been recognised in all European Administrations, and confirmed by the International Bureau (see Rule 19, &c.), that the words in addresses and signatures should be counted*,” and that “*the Australian Colonies appear to be the only Administrations which do not observe this rule*.”

In a letter dated 11th August, 1897, the Adelaide Office drew attention to the fact that “a general reduction of telgraph rates, local and intercolonial, is again being urged in several of the Colonies,” and stated that “our rates compare very favourably with those obtaining in Europe.” That office also stated that the Queensland Postmaster-General is anxious that some re-arrangement should be arrived at, but he considered—

1. That no Colony should take separate action.
2. That any change should include the charging for addresses and signatures.
3. That the rates internally should be uniform throughout the Colonies, if this can possibly be arrived at, but in any case intercolonial rates should be uniform.”