

Hon. JOSEPH COOK moved :—

“That this Conference hereby records its appreciation of the zealous and able manner in which Hon. J. Gavan Duffy, Postmaster-General of Victoria, discharged the duty of representing Australasia at the Washington Postal Conference.”

Hon. J. R. DICKSON seconded, and the motion was passed.

Hon. J. GAVAN DUFFY thanked the Conference in suitable terms. He was pleased to say that it had come to him from outside sources that his efforts at the Congress were not altogether unsuccessful. (Hear, hear.)

*Report of Permanent Heads of Departments.*

The Report of the Sub-Committee of Heads of Departments on the subjects submitted to them was next considered, most of the recommendations being agreed to. (See Minutes of Proceedings, pp. 18 to 40.)

*Queensland Mail Service.*

The Sub-Committee reported :—

“It is admitted that the present railway arrangements are extremely inconvenient to Queensland in regard to the connection of the English mails at Sydney. If any arrangement could be made by which the Commissioners of these two Colonies could arrange for a train to leave Brisbane about 1.30 P.M. on Monday, to arrive at Sydney at 5 P.M. next day, this would enable the Queensland public to post up to noon on Monday, instead of the business people having practically to close their correspondence on Saturday evening.”

Hon. J. R. DICKSON explained that lately the Queensland train service had been extended considerably north of Brisbane, and under the new arrangements places which formerly received mail matter by steamer now were supplied by train. He was looking forward to the time when some general action would be taken in the direction of a tidal or mail train running through the whole of the mainland. He knew that even the step now suggested would mean expense, but it was justifiable, and they must face it on a fair basis.

Hon. J. GAVAN DUFFY thought it the duty of the Conference to try and help Queensland in this direction, and while believing in the idea of facilitating arrangements between Queensland and New South Wales, was still more in favour of Mr. Dickson's contention that the time had come that the Colonies should have a postal train going through the whole continent, so that every colonist who wished to send a letter by mail should be able to do so at the earliest possible moment. (Hear, hear.)

Hon. J. G. JENKINS appreciated the suggestion of the permanent heads, but he was inclined to think it would be better to withdraw in favour of any arrangement that could be made for a special mail train. He saw no reason why an arrangement should not be made for a special mail train to run once a week from Brisbane direct to Adelaide. Of course it would involve a change of gauge and transfer of mails: but instead of a delay of several hours in Sydney and Melbourne the train might be accelerated to arrive in Adelaide without any special delay. The Colonies despatching their mails by such a train would all benefit by the expedition, even Tasmania. A rapid mail train from Brisbane right through to Adelaide would carry many passengers who could not, perhaps, be carried otherwise. He would suggest that this matter be referred to the Railway Commissioners of the whole of the Colonies.

Hon. JOSEPH COOK sympathised very much with Queensland, and if that Colony could be helped in the matter he would like to see it done. Such a mail train would be very desirable, but the difficulty was the enormous cost. As the result of repeated conversations with Commissioners on this very point, it was found that a special mail train per week between Brisbane and Sydney would cost £5000 a year, and to run one through to Adelaide would cost £10,000 to £12,000. If the Colonies would agree to incur that cost something might be done in that direction. It would be an admirable thing to have such a train not only as an express for mails, but also for passengers, and as an additional facility for travelling. He would like to see it, but felt justified in saying that £10,000 was too much to pay for it. The service of such a train would relieve the clerks of Sunday work, just as the previous change had relieved them in Sydney, and which was much appreciated.

The Report was agreed to.

*Special Trains.*

On the question of a special train in the event of mail steamers reaching Largs Bay on Saturdays and Sundays, the permanent heads reported as follows :—“As bearing upon the English mail train service, and considering the likelihood under the present contract of the steamers frequently reaching Largs Bay on Saturday and Sunday, we have considered the question of making some provision for forwarding these mails on to their destination by special trains, and thus avoiding the great delay which would be otherwise unavoidable. A memorandum showing possibilities in regard to special trains is appended, and we recommend that the question therein set forth be remitted for the favourable consideration of the Colonies concerned.”

Agreed to.

The Conference adjourned until 10 A.M. next day.