

Hon. J. G. JENKINS explained that he did not wish to act out of harmony with the other colonies. He recognised the important fact that between South Australia and West Australia a considerable amount of telegraphic business was conducted, and at the Premiers' Conference recently held, the Premiers of West Australia and South Australia refrained from voting on a similar resolution that was proposed. In his opinion he could not do better than follow their example, and, while not opposing the motion, he would refrain from voting in support of it.

Motion put and passed.

*The Overland Wire.*

Hon. J. R. DICKSON said this was a matter which more particularly affected the working of the overland line between Adelaide and Port Darwin, and doubtless would afford an opportunity to the South Australian representatives to say something concerning the repeated faults which appeared to exist on that line. Queensland, however, had a direct interest in the South Australian overland line, inasmuch as she had extended her telegraph system to her western border, and was desirous that South Australia should connect therewith from Alice Springs, Reid's Creek, or such other point as would be most convenient to effect such connection. He moved—

“That the question in reference to the overland telegraph wires between South Australia and Queensland be referred to the Governments of those two colonies.”

Hon. J. GAVAN DUFFY seconded, and said in his opinion this matter of land-lines was of as great importance as that of the marine cables. The great complaint in West Australia, as in Tasmania, was that the land-lines were continually breaking down. The land-line crossed South Australia, traversing some hundreds of miles through desert country, and was continually breaking down one way or another. What they wanted was that the line between the Capitals of Australia should be put in such a state as to render regular and efficient service. He gave the South Australian Government great credit for the Adelaide-Port Darwin line, but then they had paid handsomely for it, and the least they had a right to expect in return was that it should be kept in efficient order. Beside that, they had the cable to Roebuck Bay, but could not make use of it, because as soon as the floods came the land-line was washed away, so that there was no efficient service in West Australia. What they really wanted in regard to Roebuck Bay was a new land-line service through West Australia, not touching the sea coast at all, but running inland, where it was not so liable to damage as was a line skirting the coast. He hoped the Conference would be able to make a suggestion to the Colonies of West Australia, South Australia, and Queensland, by which the existing state of affairs could be remedied.

Hon. JOSEPH COOK said something would have to be done as far as New South Wales was concerned, for the simple reason that things could not go on as they were at present. Business was disarranged, and had been for months past, and the great delays caused by land-line interruptions rendered the marine cable of little use. From a list of delays from December 9, 1897, to March 8, 1898, he found no less than 38 specific delays in the cable business. It had become quite a frequent thing to hear of interruptions. Last year there were over 60, but every month they were getting more frequent, and the statement at the head of newspaper columns that the cable was interrupted had become so monotonous and so provocative of bad language and loss of business and money, that it was imperative something must be done. They were all disposed to blame the Cable Company, and when, through the breaking down of the land-line, interruptions took place, people worried Mr. Warren, Manager of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, although he assured them that not a single interruption had taken place on his line for years past. Whatever had been said about the obligations of the Eastern Extension Company applied equally to the South Australia land-line. Their receipts were from £10,000 to £12,000 a year more than the amount the Colonies guaranteed three years ago, and he thought, as their receipts were swelling so enormously, they might spend a few thousands in putting this line in repair. He was sure, if they duplicated the line all through, it could be done for £150,000, and the losses through these interruptions would be equal to interest on £300,000. He did not hesitate to say the agitation in favour of the Pacific cable was greatly strengthened by the interruptions, the fault of the land-lines; but though they would not have anything to do with the Pacific cable, they sat quietly down while they had it in their own hands to remedy all this, and to make people positively love the Eastern Extension Company by attending to the land-line, the source of the mischief. Delays during the last six months had averaged eight or nine days per month, meaning immense loss to the business public. There was an absolute feeling of irritation and disappointment in Sydney and throughout the whole mercantile community of New South Wales through these vexatious defects in the land-line.

Hon. J. G. JENKINS said some years ago he had had the pleasure of listening to a lecture delivered by the Rev. Joseph Cook of Boston; just now he had had another all to himself by the Hon. Joseph Cook. (Laughter.)

Hon. J. GAVAN DUFFY: No. Only a simple relation of facts.

Hon. J. G. JENKINS: Well, he had been glad to listen, because it showed necessity for careful inquiry into the whole subject. The statements made by Mr. Cook might be perfectly true as regarded the number of breaks, yet not correct as applied to South Australia and West Australia. During the last 14 years, according to their statistical records, there had been only 67 breaks on the overland route to Port Darwin.