

The criticism raises a side issue. It will be borne in mind that my comparison was between the cost of "operating" a postal service and the cost of "operating" a telegraph service. I hold to the absolute accuracy of my statement, and I would now merely add that, if there be not entire immunity from breaks in the case of cables, neither is there from wrecks in the case of steamers. There is this difference, however: a cable may be repaired at no great cost, while in the case of a steamer all may be lost. A railway is not quite the same as a steamer; it cannot suddenly become a total wreck, but the rails, sleepers, bridges, culverts, &c., require continually to be repaired or renewed, and to keep a railway in efficient condition an army of workmen is needed. This, however, is quite apart from the cost of operating, which consists of many expenses, embracing fuel, train expenses, repairs of rolling-stock, &c. I am quite confident that the more the question is looked into the accuracy of my statement will be brought out in stronger light. My contention is that, while the operating-cost of a postal service by sea or land increases with every mile, the cost of transmitting messages by telegraph is not appreciably affected by distance. If this view be correct, and I contend it is uncontrovertible, does it not follow that the principle of "universal penny postage"—that is to say, a low uniform rate for all distances—is peculiarly applicable to a national telegraph service reaching out to every part of our widely spread Empire?

Cost of Transmission.

I have learned at the telegraph office in this city that in the transmission of messages from Ottawa to India, South Africa, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, New Zealand, and Hong-kong the charges for transmission range from \$1.23 (5s.) to \$1.60 (6s. 6d.) per word, each word in address and signature being charged at the same rate. Such being the case, it is indisputable that a reduction in these charges to 12½ cents (6d.) a word, or even to 25 cents (1s.) a word, would greatly stimulate commerce, and in many ways prove an immense advantage to the British people. One effect would be to increase enormously the number of messages transmitted, so that instead of the cables remaining idle for certain periods of the day the operators would be kept well occupied. Of course, the rule would be for all ordinary messages to be transmitted in their proper turn, and as a consequence many messages would frequently be thrown into a slack period of the twenty-four hours, thus causing delay in transmission, which in the case of urgent messages would be inconvenient.

As to Urgent Messages.

One of the first matters to be considered will be how best to deal with urgent messages, for occasions will always arise when demands will be made for instant transmission. To my mind, this difficulty may best be met by following the precedent adopted in the postal service of Canada with respect to the speedy delivery of letters. Two years ago the Postmaster-General introduced an admirable system for the special delivery of urgent letters. The ordinary letter-postage is 2 cents, but the addition of a special delivery-stamp costing 10 cents, making a total prepayment of 12 cents, secures the prompt delivery of a letter directly on the arrival of a mail-train in any of the several cities of the Dominion. These special delivery-stamps are constantly used, and the plan is felt to be a great public benefit. By the prepayment of six times the ordinary postage a letter obtains a preference in delivery. The same principle can be applied to the State telegraph service. Let us assume that the uniform charge for ordinary messages be 12½ cents (6d.) per word, and that the same ratio of increase as in Canada be charged for urgent messages: such messages would obtain a preference in transmission on a prepayment of 75 cents (3s.) per word. And it may be remarked that this rate is considerably within the present average charge for ordinary messages. It will be understood that these remarks are submitted merely to illustrate the manner in which the principle so acceptably introduced in the Canadian postal service might be applied to the Pan-Britannic telegraph service.

Preference Messages.

The charge for preference messages would, of course, have to be determined after a full consideration of all the circumstances; it might, indeed, under some circumstances be ten times the rate of ordinary messages, but, whatever the charge, it will be obvious that among the many advantages to result from the adoption of the principle suggested there would be a very large augmentation of the general revenue from this source.

It is a matter of the first importance to make intercourse as free as possible to the mass of the British people, by removing all preventable tax on their communications. The aim is to give all persons separated, let us say, by half the globe's circumference the means of exchanging messages more speedily than by mail. A vast number of such persons, now deterred by high charges, would use the telegraph freely if the transmission rates were as low as contemplated, and the great bulk of them would be in no great hurry for a reply within a day or so. If the urgency of the business required a speedier reply it would be possible to obtain it by paying preference rates.

In submitting these several explanations I am satisfied that every one of my fellow-members of the League will extend to them due consideration. We all feel that the interests of British commerce, no less than the cause of Imperial unity, is vitally concerned in securing the greatest possible freedom of intercourse between the widely separated subjects of His Majesty. To reach the end in view we place before us a right ideal, and strive with unrelaxed efforts for its fulfilment. Our design is to bring all British people throughout the globe telegraphically into one neighbourhood in order that they may constantly maintain that sympathetic relationship so necessary to their highest interests. Our aim is to remove all monopolistic tax on free intercourse, all unnecessary toll on that marvellous gift of science—telegraphy. To accomplish these ends we must resolutely resolve to press upon the representatives of the people in Canada, in Australia, and in the Mother country the urgent need to nationalise the nervous system of this great Empire.