

The French and German delegations considered that the time was not ripe for a fundamental change, and proposed that the matter should be deferred till the next Conference. The cable companies were also much opposed to the change, and it required a great deal of argument to persuade them to agree.

The state of affairs which has been arrived at is that all pronounceable combinations of letters are admitted in code telegrams and counted at ten letters to the word, combinations of letters not pronounceable being treated as letter cipher. The test of pronounceability is somewhat vague, and will have to be applied in a liberal manner; but pure letter cipher, such as "xtphg," which is undoubtedly difficult to transmit, will be excluded from code. The new regulations will be regarded with satisfaction by the public, and they are to be welcomed as offering a way out of a difficulty which appeared almost insoluble.

Amongst other alterations of the regulations directly affecting the public, the following may be mentioned:—

The British proposition for the admission of letter cipher (to be counted at five letters to a word), although opposed by France, was carried by a large majority. This covers all the groups of letters forming commercial expressions which have hitherto been excluded.

The names of all telegraph-offices are to be charged for in future as one word, including the name of the country or territorial subdivision when that is necessary to distinguish between two or more offices of the same name. The change will come into effect on the publication of the new edition of the Official List of Telegraph Offices by the International Bureau.

The rules as to the reimbursement of telegraph charges in cases of erroneous transmission were made more liberal. Hitherto the sender of a mutilated telegram has had no right to reimbursement, or even to an investigation of his complaint, unless, by prepayment of an additional quarter-rate, he had secured the *collationnement* of the telegram—i.e., repetition by the receiving clerk to insure accuracy. The right to reimbursement in case of serious mutilation has now been extended to all telegrams in plain language, whether *collationnés* or not. This will remove a ground of friction with the public, who, not unnaturally, object strongly to being told that no investigation can be made, however serious the errors, in a plain-language telegram on which the additional quarter-fee has not been paid.

Another concession is that the right of the public to obtain reimbursement of the charge for any words entirely omitted has been extended to the European *régime*, provided that the amount in question is at least 1 franc. This right was previously limited to extra-European telegrams.

In cases of delay in the transmission of telegrams, reimbursement will be made for much shorter delays than before. For example, between adjacent countries of Europe or countries connected by direct wires, reimbursement will be made for a delay of twelve hours. This must tend to efficiency.

In the case of the interruption of a route, extra-European telegrams will be sent for twenty-four hours by a more expensive route without extra charge to the sender. This is a concession of value on the part of the cable companies.

A reform of some advantage to the public is an obligation which has been imposed on extra-European lines to transmit the time of handing-in free of charge. This obligation has been hitherto confined to the European *régime*. We understand that the Atlantic cable companies, although not at present adherents to the Convention, intend to conform with the regulations on this point; and if this be the case, the alteration will benefit the Pacific Cable Board, which have been paying a large sum annually to the Atlantic companies in order to be able to concede this facility to the public on telegrams exchanged with Australasia.

A considerable number of changes in matters of accounting have been introduced, but it is perhaps scarcely necessary to say more than that they tend to simplification.

*Press.*—Detailed provisions on the subject of Press telegrams at half rates during the night have been introduced into the regulations. These provisions are optional; but their insertion is to be welcomed as leading the way to a more general adoption of the system of half rates for Press telegrams by the European States. They are in accordance with the views of this administration.

Detailed provisions respecting the telephone service have also been introduced. They are almost entirely on the lines of the Anglo-French and Anglo-Belgian Telephone Conventions, and do not therefore call for any special comment.

*Technical Conferences.*—The Hungarian administration had put down a proposition for the holding of periodical technical Conferences, and the French administration had committed themselves very deeply to a similar proposition. It was recognised that such Conferences might be of value when there were technical subjects of general interest to discuss, but the view we had already expressed in writing was repeated by several delegations that, if established as a regular institution, there would be a danger of their becoming an authority independent of the Administrative Conferences, a result which was in every way undesirable. In these circumstances, it was decided to introduce no provision on the subject in the regulations, the administrations being left free to suggest the convocation of a technical Conference when it appeared desirable to discuss a subject of special interest.

*Memorandum.*—The New Zealand administration gave notice of four propositions for discussion at the Conference—viz., (1.) A more liberal interpretation of the regulation with regard to