

letters, any two or more expressions combined or altered without regard to the usage of the language, subject only to the condition that the expression thus formed is "pronounceable"—a proposal which would also cover words abbreviated so as to bring them within the limit of ten letters.

The Postmaster-General recognises that this proposal has much to recommend it. Among the various points in its favour, that on which the cable companies (as shown in the report of the meeting of the 9th August last) lay special stress is that it would reduce the amount of friction with the public necessarily involved in the strict enforcement of the present complicated and not too logical regulations. One of the companies called attention to a case in which a considerable amount of trouble was caused through the erroneous supposition that the code-word "inshelters" (which appears in the Official Vocabulary) was a combination of "in" and "shelters." In another similar case, the German word "landsoldat" (which also appears in the Official Vocabulary) was supposed to be a combination of the English words "land sold at." Such cases are, indeed, of frequent occurrence, and instances could be multiplied indefinitely from the experience of every Administration.

But, while the proposal possesses numerous and important advantages, it is open to strong objection from a financial point of view. The senders of plain-language telegrams would be enabled to effect a large economy by writing together expressions which must at present be paid for as single words, and, although the resultant loss of revenue might not be material to cable companies, on whose systems the proportion of telegrams in plain language is comparatively small, the loss would be great in the case of European Government Administrations, the proportions of code and plain language being there reversed. It is probable also that the adoption of the proposed rule in the international service would give rise to demands for its extension to the inland service.

An alternative would be to apply the proposed new method of counting to the extra-European system only. But such an alternative is open to serious objection inasmuch as it would introduce a new element of diversity (and that on a point of capital importance) in the regulations for European and extra-European telegrams at the very time when a practically complete assimilation has been secured so far as the regulations are concerned.

On these grounds, the Postmaster-General has with much regret arrived at the conclusion that it will not be possible for the British Administration to support a modification of the regulations on the lines which the companies have suggested.

But it occurs to him that, without altering the regulations, something might be done to meet the cable companies' wishes as regards reduction of friction with the public and with the Administrations in connection with the counting of telegrams, if it were possible to arrive at a general understanding to adopt a somewhat more liberal attitude on doubtful points.

The Postmaster-General is inclined to think that, broadly speaking, no harm would result to the revenue if the telegraph service were to refrain from challenging isolated expressions in code telegrams on the sole ground that they appear to contain unauthorised combinations or abbreviations. It is only in the case of ordinary plain-language telegrams, or in the case of code telegrams where consecutive passages are made up of combined words, that the matter is of any real importance from the revenue point of view; and here it is unquestionably necessary to maintain a strict check, while the fact of the telegram presenting a connected sense makes it comparatively easy to detect irregular expressions. On the other hand, isolated evasions, or supposed evasions of this kind, in code telegrams are at once unimportant from the revenue point of view, and extremely difficult to check.

The revenue does not suffer because the sender uses "cheerchild" or "greena" (to take two recent instances) with a prearranged meaning. If challenged, he will arrange to substitute other words in his code (possibly "artificial words" which can only be pronounced with great difficulty) and the revenue will not gain. There are, no doubt, many cases on the border-line in which the sender makes up an expression, not to be found in his code, which will tell its own tale to any one acquainted, as the addressee would be, with the subject-matter. But many such expressions (as, for instance, "Melorsyd" for "Melbourne or Sydney," "Niconly" for "Nicolaiëff only," or "Lonrot" for "London Rotterdam") which would be quite intelligible to the addressee, but not necessarily to other parties, may be said to be really of the nature of simple code; and in any case, the persons who make use of code could soon arrange to adopt unobjectionable code-words for the ideas which the expressions convey—again with the result that the payment for an additional word would be avoided. It is unnecessary to dwell on the extreme difficulty of challenging such combinations or alterations in code telegrams. It is practically impossible, in the absence of a connected sense, to press home an objection based on the contention that a given expression stands for certain words which are believed to have been altered. It is only in the case of the combination of two actual words that the telegraph service is on anything like firm ground in challenging such expressions; and when these actual words are obviously not used in their natural meaning, but are merely placed in juxtaposition to form a single code-word, the public are apt to regard it as a somewhat arbitrary course if additional payment is insisted upon.

The Postmaster-General is accordingly informing the cable companies carrying on business in this country that the British Administration is disposed, as a tentative measure, to co-operate with them, on the basis of the existing regulations, in minimising friction by limiting the check in respect of combinations and alterations to passages bearing a connected sense in plain language, and not applying it to isolated expressions tendered as code-words in code telegrams.

The Postmaster-General does not contemplate the abrogation as regards code-language of the existing prohibition of combinations and alterations. Such a course would, he fears, be injurious to the telegraph service by giving direct encouragement to the formation of codes containing undesirable expressions. The restrictions on this point in the regulations should, he thinks, be