

9th Day.]

CHEAPENING OF CABLE RATES.

[15 June, 1911.]

Mr. FISHER :[†] Yes.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I am not talking about from Australia to England ; that is a different thing.

Mr. FISHER : You are talking of to Australia.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I am talking about the service being used for Press purposes from the Old Country to New Zealand and Australia too.

Mr. FISHER : You do not mind my pointing out that that statement does not apply to Australia.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : Are you getting Press messages over the Pacific Cable to Australia ?

Mr. FISHER : Yes, both ways.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : It must be a very recent arrangement. That is under an arrangement by which you are independently subsidising the Press service ?

Mr. FISHER : Yes, it was done by a resolution in Parliament.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : That confirms my contention. In reply to Mr. Fisher's statement, Australia is in this position that they are not only giving a subsidy as a co-partner in the ownership of the Pacific Cable to the capital cost of the establishment of the Pacific Cable in the first instance and also their proportion of the annual loss, but to enable them to have the benefit of the State-owned service for Press work, they have in addition to that, within the last twelve months by the authority of Parliament, agreed to pay a further overriding amount to enable them to get Press messages to and from England over their own State cable. Why should that be ?

Mr. FISHER : We want the news.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : Do you not see that confirms the very statement I am making, that to enable one of the countries which is a co-partner in the Pacific Cable to obtain news through that cable they have, after the Pacific Cable has been in operation for a number of years, within the last twelve months decided to dip their hands into the Treasury of the Commonwealth to give a contribution to enable Press messages to go over a cable of which they were co-partners. That was the only thing Australia could do, and it was a good thing under the circumstances to do too ; I am not suggesting otherwise. It was a practical way of availing themselves to use their own cable. But it ought not to be necessary all the same. Recently I discussed a similar proposal with a view to seeing whether we could not have the use of this cable for Press work to New Zealand and the same position arose as arose with the Commonwealth. If we want to get Press messages out to our country over that Pacific Cable, in addition to giving our contribution of 8,000*l.* or 9,000*l.* a year towards the deficiency upon the work, after making a full provision for the various sides of the cable service, we were asked to pay the whole cost of the Press messages. That does not appear to me to be a business-like arrangement, and is not one I would assent to as far as New Zealand is concerned.

In short, I want to say that the position of the cable service to my mind, in the matter of enabling us to come closer to the Old World and to bring the Old World closer to us, is in a most unsatisfactory position, and, speaking for myself, I believe it would pay the Old Country, and pay our countries, and would result in no loss whatever, if we owned the whole lot of them, even if the same people controlled them, just as under the system of ownership of the Pacific Cable Board. As a matter of business they are entitled to do the best they can with their cable services—one