

15 June, 1911.]

CHEAPENING OF CABLE RATES.

[9th Day.]

Mr. SAMUEL—*cont.*

of the Telephone Company's plant has been referred with general public approval in this country.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: Is that a judge of the High Court?

The PRESIDENT: Yes, a judge of the King's Bench. Perhaps I might say that when I was at the Bar I practised for many years before this Commission and represented both traders and railway companies at various times, and I can say from a pretty long experience that it gives universal satisfaction. It is a very well constituted body—a judge, a business man, and a railway man, the judge presiding and determining all questions of law himself; and upon questions of law, and only questions of law, there is an appeal to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. SAMUEL: The fourth and the last measure relates to the establishment of a system of wireless telegraphy, but the discussion of that had better be postponed until we come to Sir Joseph Ward's proposal under that head. I certainly think the development of the system of wireless telegraphy cannot fail in the future to have some effect on the reduction of cable rates. Along those four lines we are now proceeding—the establishment in the near future of a new rate, half the present rate, for telegrams which are in plain language and liable to deferment of not more than twenty-four hours; a reduction in press rates which we contemplate may be possible in the not far distant future; further, we have the general system of control over the companies which will be enforced through the landing licences, and fourthly the reduction which may be expected to accrue in the future from the development of wireless telegraphy. So that in passing this resolution, as I trust it will do, the Conference may feel assured that it will not merely be giving expression to a vague declaration embodying an unexceptionable sentiment, but also that the resolution will be followed in the near future by effective achievements in the direction that is so much desired.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: The resolution is certainly timely, and we in Canada will have no hesitation at all in indorsing it. The explanation just given by Mr. Samuel has shown, however, that the evil which the resolution seeks to remedy is already pretty well on the way to being extinguished altogether. All the trouble which exists at the present time and which we complain of seems to be centred on the Atlantic part of the communication. On the Pacific Ocean we have the Pacific Cable, which is practically under the control of the Governments represented at this table. Across the Continent we have two or three lines of communication already, although only one of them, I think, at the present time is in direct communication with the Pacific Cable, that is to say, the Canadian Pacific Railway Line. But I would observe that we have in Canada also a Commission similar almost to the Railway and Canal Commission of which Mr. Samuel has spoken, which has given satisfaction in our country, and I might also say that our Commission has given very general satisfaction. The tolls of the telegraph lines are under the control of this Commission, and if any complaint is made that the tolls are excessive the matter can be at once investigated and is under the jurisdiction of the Commission, and if a grievance is found I have no doubt at all that the remedy will be immediately applied. The trouble is with the Atlantic part of the present cable. There is an impression in my country that there is a combination between all the cable companies to maintain the tolls at an excessive rate. Mr. Asquith asked a moment ago if that was only a feeling or if there was more behind it. There is a feeling amounting almost to conviction that such a thing exists; it would be perhaps difficult to prove it mathematically, but if a proper investigation could be had, I think it would show that there is good ground for the feeling which now prevails.