

9th Day.]

CHEAPENING OF CABLE RATES.

[15 June, 1911.]

Mr. PEARCE—*cont.*

the revenue of the Pacific Cable Board to the extent of 14,000*l.* per annum, it puts that Board in a better position to make reductions on its ordinary messages. Possibly that 14,000*l.* per annum might be used in still further reducing the charges, and it seems inexplicable to us that that consent should have been refused for the reason given.

General BOTHA: I will ask my colleague, Sir David Graaff, to explain our position.

Sir D. DE VILLIERS GRAAFF: We had a good deal to say upon this motion, but after having heard the explanation given by Mr. Samuel, the Postmaster-General of the United Kingdom, I find that it meets our position fully, and I will say that it will be a matter of great gratification to our South African Union to see the efforts that have been made here, and so far, from my point of view, the very successful efforts of Mr. Samuel. The reduction of 50 per cent. in plain language messages is indeed to my mind a great concession for a very large number of people who send messages who are not business people, who do not code their telegrams, and they will enjoy this tremendous reduction. We out in the Union do guarantee the Eastern South African Cable and Telegraph Company; that is to say, if their minimum amount of receipts does not exceed a given amount we give a subsidy of so-much per annum. Of late we have paid the full subsidy, because, notwithstanding the fact that the rates had been reduced, it has not had the effect of increasing the revenue, and therefore we have had to pay; but we gladly support this resolution, for we are in favour of a reduction in the cable rates throughout the world. Our people, I am sure, will very much appreciate what has been done on the part of the United Kingdom Post Office, and I feel after what has been said that our interests have been safeguarded in that direction. I feel sure we would not have been able to do as well ourselves, and therefore we are content to leave the matter in the hands of the Postmaster-General and gladly to support the resolution which is before the Conference now.

Sir EDWARD MORRIS: I would like to say also that this was a matter in which we were very much interested in Newfoundland, in that those rates were very excessive and prohibitive, although nine of the Atlantic cables are now laid to Newfoundland, but it seems to me that all that could be desired, or very largely, is being accomplished by the negotiations which have been going on, and, as has been stated by the gentleman who preceded me in speaking, I should have, perhaps, occupied the time of the Conference somewhat in putting forward our case in relation to this matter if it had not been for the very satisfactory explanation that we have had from the Postmaster-General.

Mr. SAMUEL: The point raised by Mr. Pearce with reference to the suggested new cable to be laid by the Pacific Cable Board between Australia and New Zealand is a matter not within the province of the British Post Office but of the British Treasury. However, I will take steps to represent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the strong desire that is felt both in Australia and New Zealand that the Pacific Cable Board should be authorised by the United Kingdom, so far as the United Kingdom is a party to that Board, to proceed with this work. Perhaps that is all I need say at present.

The PRESIDENT: I will see that further consideration is given to that matter.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: That is very satisfactory. I intended to refer to it on the question of the Atlantic Cable, but it is not necessary now.