

NOTE ADDED BY MR. BRIGHT.

Within a few days of the above address being delivered the Postmaster-General made an important announcement in the House of Commons in regard to reduction of cable rates, and concurrently with this appeared in the daily Press a highly expensive, but also highly effective, advertisement of the Western Union Telegraph Company of America.

Mr. Herbert Samuel has rather broken the spell of inactivity alluded to at the commencement of my address, and I need scarcely say that what I urged for in the year 1900 I am glad to see really taken up and secured by an energetic Postmaster-General even in the year 1911. I refer to the introduction of deferred (non-urgent) rates, which should be of considerable value for personal and social purposes. They should also help towards the dissemination of a larger volume of news of Imperial importance in a way that will tend to avoid misunderstandings due to unsuitable condensation at the transmitting end. Further, by the consequently increased volume of intercommunication a better mutual understanding should be achieved. I hope also the so-called night and week-end letter systems of the Western Union Company may prove beneficial, though these have been abandoned by the Commercial Cable Company in the United States after a comparatively brief trial.

The Western Union Company's advertisement is headed in bold type, "Why the agreements between the Western Union and the Anglo-American Telegraph Company and the Direct United States Cable Company have been modified." It may, however, be pointed out that if the Western Union Company were so desirous to improve our telegraphic facilities with America, much the same result could have been achieved by their extending to British companies the same facilities in America which have always been extended to American companies over here by H.M. Government.

But the main burden of the Western Union advertisement is apparently to convince the British public that no monopoly will be established by the "new arrangement," or "modified" agreement, as it has been facetiously termed. It is, of course, obvious that competition will continue as between the Western Union Telegraph Company and the Commercial Cable Company—and we know nothing at present which points to a combination here—but these two being American corporations, a monopoly is established, in effect, nationally and strategically speaking, by the leasing for ninety-nine years of two British companies' cables to the Western Union Company of America. I observe that the advertisement is so worded as to give the impression that the Anglo-American Telegraph Company and the Direct United States Cable Company continue to have the same separate existence, in the matter of cable control, as before. If, however, the "arrangement" left things in that way, how comes it that the Western Union Company applied for a transfer to themselves of the landing licenses held by the Anglo and Direct United States companies respectively? A satisfactory answer to that question would be worth a good deal more than much that constitutes the manifesto. I have not been able to convince myself of the separate existence suggested; and, on the contrary, I maintain that every one of the thirteen Atlantic cables landing on British soil will now be under American control if the said licenses are transferred to the Western Union Company—at all events, until a somewhat distant time when they again come under review. Indeed, unless these 99-year leases have some very special meaning of their own (utterly different from the ordinary meaning), complete control must apply for that period.

I respectfully submit that control of at least those cables which have hitherto been under British control is far more important, in any circumstances, than control of the rates, even if the latter can be permanently relied upon with a foreign company outside our jurisdiction. In a word, I venture to suggest that securing favourable tariff reforms and control of the rates constitute insufficient grounds for abandoning our national position (such as it was) in the matter of telegraphic communication between the Mother-country and Canada.

Further, if these landing licenses are transferred, I maintain that the need for an Imperial Atlantic cable and Canadian land-line connection will become far stronger than it has ever been. That, too, appears to be the view widely taken in Canada, quite independently of party politics.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given: printing (1,600 copies), £27 10s.

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