

1877.

QUEENSLAND.

REPORT,

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS, Etc.,

OF THE

CABLE CONFERENCE,

HELD IN

SYDNEY,

IN

JANUARY—FEBRUARY, 1877.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY COMMAND.

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CABLE CONFERENCE.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE ON DUPLICATION OF THE CABLE BETWEEN AUSTRALASIA AND EUROPE, HELD IN SYDNEY, IN JANUARY, 1877.

The Conference on the subject of Duplication of the Telegraph Cable between Australasia and Europe assembled in Sydney, and held their first meeting on the 25th January, 1877.

The whole of the Australasian Colonies were represented, as follows, viz. :—

<i>New South Wales</i> ...	The Honorable John Robertson, Colonial Secretary. The Honorable Alexander Stuart, Colonial Treasurer. The Honorable J. F. Burns, Postmaster-General.
<i>New Zealand</i> ...	The Honorable G. McLean, Postmaster-General and Commissioner of Telegraphs, and Commissioner of Customs.
<i>Queensland</i> ...	The Honorable Samuel Walker Griffith, Q.C., Attorney-General and Secretary for Public Instruction. The Honorable Charles Stuart Mein, Postmaster-General.
<i>South Australia</i> ...	The Honorable Sir Henry Ayers, K.C.M.G., Chief Secretary. The Honorable Ebenezer Ward, Minister of Agriculture and Education.
<i>Tasmania</i> ...	The Honorable James Whyte, Member of the Executive Council.
<i>Victoria</i> ...	The Honorable R. S. Anderson, Commissioner of Customs. The Honorable R. Ramsay, Minister of Public Instruction and Postmaster-General.
<i>Western Australia</i> ...	The Honorable Malcolm Fraser, Surveyor-General, and Member of the Executive Council.

At the first meeting of the Conference, the Honorable John Robertson was unanimously elected Chairman, and Mr. Alex. C. Budge, Clerk of the Executive Council, was appointed Secretary.

The Conference unanimously agreed to the following Resolution :—

That the Representatives of each Colony shall undertake to recommend to the Governments and Parliaments of the Colonies which they represent the adoption of measures to carry out the resolutions of the Conference to which they may have given their assent.

The Conference then proceeded to discuss the whole question of duplication of the Cable, and the various routes proposed; when, after mature deliberation, the following resolutions were adopted :—

1. That it is desirable to extend and improve the means of Telegraphic Communication between Australia and Europe, by the duplication, where necessary, of the cables or lines connecting the same.
2. That any subsidy on ocean cables to connect Australia with Europe shall be borne by the several Australian Colonies assenting thereto, in proportion to population.
3. That the loss (if any) on competing colonial lines, to connect the cables with the main telegraphic system of each colony, should in like manner be borne by all the colonies concerned.

NOTE.—Tasmania voted against this resolution,—New Zealand, Victoria, and Western Australia did not vote.

4. That inasmuch as it has been decided that it is desirable to extend and improve the means of telegraphic communication between Australia and Europe, by the duplication, where necessary, of the cables or lines connecting the same, and that the subsidy on ocean cables to connect Australia with Europe be borne by the several colonies assenting thereto in proportion to population :

- (1.) The several Governments of South Australia, Queensland, and Western Australia be invited to open negotiations for the construction of cables connecting their several colonies with Singapore or Ceylon; and the Government of New Zealand for the construction of a cable from that colony to the United States of America.
- (2.) That in such negotiations the Government of New Zealand enter into communication with the Government of the United States, for the purpose of procuring their consent to contribute to the payment of any subsidy that may be payable in respect of the same; and further, that in all the negotiations of the several Governments the necessity of procuring a reduction of the present tariff rates to be especially kept in view, the maximum rate being six shillings per word.
- (3.) That in the meantime the South Australian Government be requested, on behalf of the several colonies, to urge upon the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company the necessity of keeping a repairing steamer between Banjoewangi and Port Darwin, to repair any accident to that portion of cable.

5. That having in view the serious annoyance and loss occasioned by the mutilation of messages in transmission through Java, the President of this Conference be requested, on behalf of the Australasian Colonies represented, to communicate with the Secretary of State, for the purpose of obtaining permission from the Government of Netherlands-India to employ English operators on the land lines in Java.
6. That the Governments of South Australia and New South Wales be empowered to make arrangements with the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company for a reduction of message tariff to six shillings per word, at a subsidy not exceeding £20,000 per annum, terminable at one year's notice; and that such subsidy be borne by the respective colonies in proportion to population—any colony to be at liberty to withdraw on like notice.

The Colonies of New Zealand, Tasmania, and Western Australia refrained from voting on this resolution.

7. That the several colonies agree to allow the necessary official telegrams of H. M. Ships to pass over their respective lines free of charge.
8. That the Governments of Queensland and South Australia be requested to circulate among the respective Governments the draft bills referred to in the resolutions of the Intercolonial Conference held in Sydney, passed on the 10th February, 1873, for removing the defects in the law relating to the extradition of criminals, and the absconding of debtors, with a view to the same being submitted to the respective Legislatures as early as practicable.

(The following are the resolutions referred to:—

"That the present state of the law in regard to the extradition of criminals escaping from one colony to another is defective. That the Government of Queensland be requested to prepare a bill on the subject, which the representatives of the several colonies undertake—provided it is approved by their respective law officers—to endeavor to pass into law.

"That the present state of the law in regard to remedies to be had against absconding debtors is defective.

"That the Government of South Australia be requested to prepare a Bill to remedy the defects, and, subject to the approval of their respective law officers, the members of this Conference will endeavor to procure the passing of a similar Bill in their respective Legislatures."

9. That, in the opinion of the Conference, it is desirable that a uniform telegraphic code should be adopted by the several Australasian Colonies.

A motion proposed by the Representatives of Queensland, "That any duplicate system should be by a distinct route throughout from that now in use," was negatived. The colonies of New Zealand, Tasmania, and Western Australia refrained from voting.

A motion proposed by the Representatives of South Australia, "That this Conference approves of the construction of a duplicate line from Singapore to Banjoewangi," was also negatived,—those in favor of the motion being New South Wales, South Australia, and Victoria.

A motion was also proposed by the Representative of Western Australia, "That any duplicate of the present Cables start from the North-west coast of Western Australia, provided it is shown that by such the best communication with Europe and Asia is secured at a moderate cost as compared with other and alternative routes which have been advanced;" but after some discussion the motion, with the concurrence of the Conference, was withdrawn.

A motion, proposed by the Representatives of Queensland, "That it is desirable that a Submarine Cable should be laid from Singapore to Cape York, in Queensland, the Government of that Colony undertaking, in the event of such Cable being laid, to connect their existing land lines therewith," was negatived. Tasmania did not vote.

The Conference discussed several other questions on which no definite action was taken.

Attention is called to the Appendix of Minutes of Proceedings, Report of Evidence taken, and Documents laid before the Conference.

JOHN ROBERTSON,	}	New South Wales.
ALEX. STUART,		
J. P. BURNS,	}	New Zealand.
GEO. McLEAN,		
S. W. GRIFFITH,	}	Queensland.
CHARLES STUART MEIN,		
HENRY AYERS,	}	South Australia.
EBENEZER WARD,		
JAMES WHYTE,	}	Tasmania.
ROBERT RAMSAY,		
MALCOLM FRASER,	}	Western Australia.

ALEX. C. BUDGE,
Secretary.

The Treasury, Sydney, 2nd February, 1877.