

there happens to be a press of other business, there is no regulation for the Press messages to obtain any precedence; and the result is that these messages are so seriously delayed that they very often reach us too late for publication. An event may occur between, say, 10 and 11 o'clock in the morning, and if the telegraphic message is delayed an hour or two in transmission, the result is that it does not reach us until too late for publication. If it comes in after 3 o'clock, which is very frequently the case, it reaches us too late for that day's publication.

187. *Hon. Mr. Hall.*] Is 3 o'clock the latest time you can receive messages for that day's publication?—We can take nothing much after half-past 2 o'clock.

188. *The Chairman.*] Do the present arrangements of the Press Association aggravate these evils, or do they leave them as they are?—I do not suppose they have any great effect on this particular grievance, which arises from the telegraph arrangements generally.

189. How does the working of the special wire affect them? Does it aggravate or alleviate them?—It has no effect whatever on the evening papers, excepting so far as in giving undue advantage to the morning papers. The special wire is entirely a morning-paper privilege; and in reference to that matter I should like to say that the proposal in regard to the leasing of the special wire seems to me to be very unfair. I gather that, under the conditions proposed by the lessees of the special wire, its effect will be to preclude any new paper getting the advantage of the wire unless upon extravagant terms, thus securing an entire monopoly to the Association and its newspapers.

190. Do you mean to say that that effect is produced in consequence of the arrangement as between the Government and the Association, or is it in consequence of and entirely due to the regulations made by the Association itself?—It is in consequence of both.

191. How do you arrive at your conclusions in regard to the first?—Because I understand it is proposed as a condition—in fact, a stipulation under the special-wire lease.

192. At what page?—The first page. It provides, under the heading "Special Wire," "that the wire be not taken under any circumstances for ordinary Press purposes." I understand that that is one of the proposals as a condition in the lease of the special wire to the Association.

193. It is for the renewal of the lease, is it not?—It is a proposal for the lease of the special wire under certain conditions. It is to lease the special wire for Association purposes exclusively.

194. It is not exclusively for the Press Association. Any other association might obtain the same privileges?—The proposal is respecting "a fresh lease of a wire between Auckland and the Bluff, with such changes and modifications as have in the course of the past fourteen months been found to be absolutely necessary to the successful working of the system for Press purposes." In fact, it is a proposal for a lease of the wire to the Association for its own exclusive purposes.

195. There is nothing in the lease granted to the Press Association to prevent any other person entering into an arrangement with the Government for the use of another wire?—As I understand the arrangement, it stands thus: The present Association, under its lease, has the entire right to the wire; so that, were any other association to be formed, many papers would be unable to join it so long as the old Association enjoys this special privilege.

196. I understand from what you say that you consider that in the circumstances the granting of a lease of the use of the special wire to this company gives it a monopoly of the newspapers?—Yes, I do.

197. Do you happen to know the terms under which the Association has obtained this lease?—I believe I am acquainted with the general terms.

198. And do you consider that these terms practically amount to the granting of a monopoly to the Association?—Certainly I do; and I think also that the way in which I understand they have been laid down by the Association, precluding any new paper from participating in its telegraphic benefits unless on condition of paying a sum of £500 for the privilege of joining the Association, practically gives a monopoly of telegraphic news, not only to the Association, but also to the papers at present connected with it, because very few new papers could afford to pay such a bonus as £500 at first starting.

199. I have here the report of a Select Committee which sat in December, 1879, of which Mr. Walter Johnston was the Chairman. The second section of that report reads to the following effect:—

That evening papers should be allowed one thousand words during the day at present rates, and one hundred words to take precedence of all messages (except urgent messages) between half-past one o'clock and half-past two.

That recommendation, I understand, was never given effect to. Now, will you be good enough to state your opinion upon that proposal? Will you state whether or not you think it would be beneficial to the evening papers were we to adopt it?—It would certainly not be more than a step in the right direction.

200. Would it be better than the present arrangement?—It has some advantage over existing arrangements, but it does not go far enough. It proposes to give the Press a precedence of only one hundred words altogether, from all stations. To make the concession of any real value it would be necessary that it should apply to each station—that is, that we should be allowed to get precedence for a message not exceeding one hundred words from any station. It is very seldom indeed that any important message is much less than one hundred words. If we could get a message of that length from any station, or from each of several stations in special cases, it would be of some value; but, if the precedence were limited to one hundred words altogether, which might all have to be sent from one station, the value of the concession becomes very doubtful indeed.

201. As the representative of an evening paper, then, you do not, as I understand you to state, attach much value to this recommendation?—No. It is a slight improvement, so far as it goes; but it does not go far enough.

202. *Hon. Mr. Hall.*] Would it not be of some practical use so far as your Australian telegrams are concerned?—Not as regards our Australian summaries from Auckland and the Bluff. It would, of course, be of some use so far as the cable messages are concerned which are sent through from Wakapuaka.

203. You were one of a deputation from the evening papers that waited on me?—Yes.