

418. Was the office being kept open from 8 till 10 for Press messages, independently of the special wire, a source of loss to the department?—No, I do not think that.

419. You mean outside the special wire?—The offices which were kept open for Press messages now close at 8 o'clock. Formerly they used to be kept open for ordinary messages from 8 o'clock till 10.

420. Was that a source of loss?—It was after the establishment of the special wire, but not before.

421. And do you think if the office had been kept open between 8 and 10 for ordinary Press messages that it would have paid the extra expense of keeping the office open?—No; that it would not.

422. Would there be much loss?—No; I cannot say that—it would be the expense of keeping the operator and clerk there. But the paper which did not contribute to the special wire would derive advantage from it, and we should have to be ready to both send and receive messages.

423. If Grahamstown kept open until 10 o'clock, would it not mean that other offices must also keep open until that hour?—It would, of course, depend on the number of stations kept open. Of course, during the session it is necessary, for the sake of getting the parliamentary news, that the office should be kept open, but not during the rest of the year.

424. Supposing the special wire were abolished altogether, would it not greatly increase the work of the department?—No, I do not think it would.

425. Would you not in that case, instead of having to send a single message, have to send a great variety?—It just depends upon the writer. I am certain that the Press telegrams now sent by the special wire are fully 50 per cent. more redundant than they need be, and that they load our wires with just double the amount of verbiage that there is the slightest occasion for.

426. Why?—Because they have told me it is cheaper to send a telegram *in extenso*, as there is no time lost in amplifying it on its arrival at the newspaper office. This I consider is altogether wrong. The telegrams sent to the papers are very different from those which are sent by the public. In the former instance they are sent in the same way as you read them in the papers, and you have only to see the difference between them to appreciate what I say. The difference is very great from the ordinary public telegrams where they have to pay a penny a word.

427. You mean that the same message, if sent by one of the public who has to pay, would be sent in a very much less number of words?—Yes. I took the trouble the other day to count a message which had come to one of the papers, just as it was wired, and I put the whole thing in thirty words.

428. And how many did it contain as it was sent?—One hundred and fifty.

429. *The Chairman.*] Your objection rather refers to the lowness of the charge?—Yes; the lowness of the tariff. And besides, if the papers pay so much per word, their news, or rather the actual words, is condensed, which keeps up the class of correspondents; but the present system makes them lazy. The net result would be the same to the newspaper, but would be a great saving in the amount of work required to be done by the operators.

430. I understood Mr. Hall to ask as to a better system of working the special wire than that which prevails now in the matter of independent messages. Even when the wires appear to be overloaded by a number of independent messages, is it not a fact that, by the use of the special wire, and the same message going to many papers, there is in reality a saving in the work actually done? That is what I understand him to mean?—I am aware of that, and will admit that sometimes this is so. But sometimes a reporter, who only wishes to send a message to one station by the special wire, will be told that it cannot be taken, as all the papers, who are on an equal footing, have an equal right to it. He will then say, "Well, then, send it along to all stations—everywhere;" and then it has to go through the colony, and everywhere the papers get it who may not want it, and who will not use it. That I know for a fact. We have instructions from the Press Association not to take messages to an individual paper; therefore, on such occasions as that to which I have referred, the correspondents will make it "*vide*" through the whole colony.

431. *Mr. Ireland.*] Would you kindly state if, in your opinion, the special wire were done away with, the various papers at one part of the colony would get as full information as those at another, at a less cost to the colony than is the case now. I mean if this Press Association were done away with, so far as the special wire is concerned?—You mean to say, instead of our spending 1s. and only getting 9d.

432. Supposing that this special wire were done away with, and that all the papers in the colony were placed upon equal terms, do you believe that the telegraphic system could be worked at a less cost than it is at the present time?—Do you mean, and get more money for less work?

433. I mean at the present rates that are paid, and under the circumstances you have described?—Yes. There is a vast lot of matter placed upon the wires that is not news, and what in the newspaper offices themselves is known as "padding." There are large numbers of words put in which the newspapers themselves could insert to complete the telegrams. Before this cheap rate came into use correspondents only sent the skeletons of their messages.

434. Then the public lost nothing?—Nothing whatever; and, as I told you before, the other evening I put a message of 150 words into thirty.

435. From which I infer that there might be made a saving of £700 a year to the colony.—And also a large saving to newspapers as well.

436. *Mr. Bain.*] When the two Associations had the special wire between them, was the department working at a profit?—Yes, we were, though not a very large one.

437. Then, as to this proposal to charge a halfpenny a word?—I do not say that that should be the charge; it is only a proposition. At the same time it is one which I believe would greatly increase the revenue of the department.

438. Yes; but you did not state that in your memorandum.—No; that is not for me to fix.

439. At the ordinary Press rates I suppose that the telegrams, condensed in the way you have stated, would produce a revenue equal to that which the Government now gets from the special wire?—Well, not at 1s. per 100 words.