

The debate at this stage was adjourned, on the motion of Mr. Unmack, until half-past 2 on Monday afternoon.

MONDAY, 2ND MARCH, 1891.

*Reduction in Rates of Press Telegrams relating to the Proceedings of the Australian National Convention.*

Sir John Bray said he had been requested by the Press of South Australia to ask the Conference to agree to make some reduction in the rate for Press telegrams in connection with the proceedings of the Federal Convention now sitting. He thought the delegates of the Conference would agree with him that there should be some reduction made, so as to enable full reports to be sent to the other colonies. He moved, That, so far as relates to reports of the Federal Convention now sitting, the intercolonial Press rates for telegrams be reduced by one-half.

The Hon. J. Gavan Duffy supported the request. It might be outside their ordinary business, because newspapers were but business concerns; but, on an important historical occasion like this, an exception might be made to general rules, and the Conference might see their way to allow some concession. Though held in Sydney, the Convention might have been held in any of the other colonies; and, that being so, it was natural that all the people of the other colonies should have as fair an opportunity of knowing what was done as the residents of New South Wales had, and that the public journals of each colony should be on the same footing. It should not be taken as a precedent; he merely urged it on account of the grand important historical occasion. He seconded the motion.

The Hon. B. S. Bird supported the motion, and pointed out that there would be a benefit in granting the reduced rate, as there would be a very great use made of the lines in disseminating the news to other colonies.

The Hon. T. Unmack thought they should not allow it to go as a precedent; but this was one of those exceptional occasions where they should offer every facility for furnishing the other colonies with information they were anxious to obtain. He was willing to submit the proposal to his Cabinet, for in his colony at any rate this was required, and would recommend its adoption.

The Hon. G. J. Ward desired to express his appreciation of what the Cable Company had already done. He understood that they had agreed to reduce the rate to New Zealand for messages reporting the Conference proceedings by one-half.

The Hon. D. O'Connor said he had the fullest sympathy with the proposal of Sir John Bray, and agreed with what had been so well said by the representatives of the other colonies, and he would promise at once, on behalf of the Government of this colony, to transmit the messages at half-price.

The Hon. J. Gavan Duffy suggested that a letter be written to the Eastern Extension Cable Company, asking them also whether, in view of the importance of the occasion, they would have the messages relating to the Federal Convention transmitted at half rates over their lines.

The Hon. D. O'Connor.—I have already directed that to be done.

*Reduced Cable Rates.*

The Hon. T. Unmack resumed discussion on the motion of Sir John Bray, "That it is desirable to enter into the agreement with the Eastern Extension Company on the basis of the draft agreement laid on the table." He said that when they adjourned on Saturday he was about to show—having disposed of the political aspect of the question—the monetary aspects, as it might have been perhaps considered to be an inducement for Queensland to join in this proposed subsidy or guarantee. Mr. Bird had stated that the cable business of Queensland was £27,000 per annum, but during the last year £14,031 was the Queensland share of the business. If they took this at the four-shilling rate it would cost them £6,038 instead of £14,000, and to this must be added a subsidy or guarantee, amounting to £14,700. This again added to the sum of £6,038 gave a total expenditure of £20,000 against the present expenditure of £14,031, or a loss to the colony of £5,282. There was another aspect of a more serious nature which would appear before them. They had to consider in the first instance that the line was a monopoly which was not looked upon with favour by any of the Queensland politicians. The public of Queensland were averse to a proposal to subsidise that monopoly in any shape or form, considering that there would be no real great advantages derived therefrom. Then there was another point. Although they had a population of 426,000, the persons who did business with the cable only numbered between three hundred or four hundred. It would thus be seen that the general taxpayers would be called upon to pay a subsidy of £14,700 to put £8,000 into the pockets of the three hundred or four hundred business men. The proposals would not be favourably entertained by the Queensland public, and he would be bound to oppose them. Again, this guarantee and subsidy was asked in support of a so-called duplicate cable. Sir J. Pender, in his evidence before the Colonial Conference in London, 1887, estimated the life of a cable at twenty years. The first cable had been laid in 1872; it was therefore practically dead; the so-called duplicate was laid about 1878, and had therefore only about seven or eight years to run. The Eastern Extension Company took good care not to let any one know the condition of their cables from Port Darwin, and it need create no surprise to find traffic interrupted some morning; and a subsidy or guarantee for one cable was not justifiable. If there were any advantages to be gained it would be a different matter altogether. He would ask those present to closely consider the proposals made by the Eastern Extension Company before they agreed to them, and to see what advantages they were to reap. He would ask them to throw off that mesmeric influence which had been placed over them by the Eastern Extension Company. They were told that the cable rates would be reduced by adopting the proposals, but they would within a very short time have that facility without offering special inducements. The company proposed