

clusion that it was not desirable for the colony to join. In order to show that the Ministry were not acting in opposition to public opinion, he would mention that he had received telegrams in which it was stated that the Press of New Zealand supported the action of the Government. No member of the Conference would dispute that the Press generally were good judges of what was calculated to produce commercial prosperity; and as the Press supported the course they had taken, the Conference might be sure there were strong reasons why New Zealand should not come in. Mr. Bird had suggested, in view of the five colonies not agreeing to the four-shilling rate, that Sir John Pender be asked to charge 6s. in order to get over the guarantee altogether. That, he understood, had not been done. Mr. O'Connor had pointed out clearly that it was not desirable that the six-shilling rate should be started at all, for the simple reason that his colony and others regarded the reduction to 4s. as a necessity. So far as New Zealand was concerned, that colony, under the most favourable circumstances under the new agreement, would have to pay 4s. 10d. a word, which, with the guarantee of 2s., would make the rate over 6s. However, as Mr. Duffy had said, they must agree to differ. The time might come when New Zealand would change her opinions, but at present she had made her decision; but he did not entertain any feelings other than those of a most kindly character to the other colonies. Like Mr. Unmack, he did not see that the matter had any bearing on the federation of the colonies.

The motion was put by the chairman, and carried.

The Hon. Mr. Bird read a letter and telegram, which were laid on the table.

Mr. S. H. Lambton submitted a progress report from the heads of departments, which embraced the most important—namely, Revised draft of the Australasian Convention; uniform telegraph regulations; question of reduced intercolonial telegraph rates; and four or five other matters of minor importance, for which space had been left, and which might occupy a few more hours. Their desire had been to secure, as far as possible, uniformity throughout the colonies. They had agreed upon all the leading features of the Australasian Convention, though there might be a few verbal alterations necessary.

The Hon. J. G. Duffy proposed that the report be considered at the next meeting of the Conference.

Consideration of Mr. Duffy's motion *re* Vienna Conference was also deferred.

Uniform Australasian Postage of One Penny per Half-ounce.

The Hon. J. Gavan Duffy moved, "That in the opinion of this Conference the time has arrived when a uniform rate of postage for letters of 1d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. should be adopted through the whole of Australasia." In a neighbouring Chamber of the city, another Convention was sitting to consider the question of "one people—one destiny." The question he proposed, if less important, was perhaps more practicable, that of "one people, one postage-stamp, 1d." As they were aware, there was great diversity among the different colonies in the way they treated their own inland postage; and it seemed to him that the time had arrived when they might put the whole system on one uniform basis, and taking all things into consideration it would not be too rash to boldly say that the colonies should now adopt the unit of 1d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. for the whole of them. Of course, he could not say, as he said when dealing with the question of the cable guarantee, that there would be no loss. He believed there would be at first a loss to some of the colonies—a considerable loss; but it was a question that must be considered, and it seemed to him they were in as favourable a position now to consider it as at any time. He thought there would be an immediate loss; but all past experience and analogy showed that it would not be a permanent one, or even for long. In Victoria they had already taken the lead, they had brought their postage down to the unit of 1d. throughout the whole of that colony for the $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. In doing so they had made up their minds they would lose £100,000 of revenue to start with, but he was happy to say their expectations in that direction were not fulfilled, and instead of £100,000, their loss (though, owing to their doing as others did, mixing up the 1d. receipt stamps with the letters, it was impossible to arrive at an actual estimate) was only £79,000 for the first year the system was in operation—that is, they lost £20,000, or a fifth less than they expected; and, owing to circumstances members of the Conference would be acquainted with, their finances were not so prosperous during that period, and when business was not brisk, of course there was less correspondence and greater loss to the revenue. They looked hopefully forward to the time when that loss would be altogether wiped out. None of the other colonies had taken the same bold stand as Victoria had taken. [Mr. O'Connor was understood to question this. He had introduced a Bill for the very purpose, though it had not been carried]. Well, none of the others had passed a law, though he was glad to hear Mr. O'Connor had good intentions in that way. Not long ago the postage in Victoria was 4d., then they reduced it to 2d. throughout the colony, and then to 1d., at which it now stood. In New South Wales they have a city and suburban rate of 1d. the $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., on country letters 2d., and on intercolonial letters 2d. In Queensland they have a 1d. rate for letters for delivery within the limits of the city or town where posted; between separate post towns, 2d.; intercolonial, 2d. In South Australia an inland rate of 2d., and an intercolonial rate of 2d. (they did not appear to have any 1d. rate). In Tasmania the rate was—for town letters 1d., inland 2d., and intercolonial 2d. In Western Australia a town rate of 1d., country rate 2d., and intercolonial 2d. In New Zealand there was a town rate of 1d., country rate 2d., and intercolonial rate of 2d. the $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Now, it would be noticed that in a great many instances the colonies had a penny district within certain post towns, whereas in their own inland districts and intercolonially they had a twopenny rate. A little while ago if any one had proposed to adopt that system he would have been assailed, as he feared some would assail him (the speaker), with a cry of "Perfectly impossible," "Absolutely absurd," "Ruinous in the extreme." When any forward motion was proposed the cry was nearly always the same—"It is utterly impossible," "We have been accustomed to the present state of things so long," "It would be a great loss." But experience