

officially, his most sincere thanks, and expressed a hope that soon he might have the pleasure of returning their hospitality and kindness in some shape or form in Queensland, where he would be pleased to welcome any or all of his colleagues at the Conference.

The Hon. D. O'Connor said that on behalf of the colony, his colleagues, and himself, he cordially reciprocated Mr. Unmack's sentiments.

Conference adjourned till Tuesday, 10th March, at 10 a.m.

TUESDAY, 10TH MARCH, 1891.

The Secretary read a letter from the local manager of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, containing the copy of a message from Sir John Pender relative to finding a better route for the Darwin cables, and which stated that the company had carefully considered the matter, and that soundings were being obtained to see whether an alteration of the route to the north of Sunbarra or Baly would be likely to give better security against volcanic interruption. The message further stated that the colonies might rely upon the company continuing to do everything possible to preserve communication in the highest state of efficiency.

Sir John Bray said that at the Adelaide Conference it was agreed that South Australia should communicate with India relative to arranging for the introduction of post-cards between India and Australasia at the same rate as to England, &c. He had received a reply from the Indian Government, stating that they could not at present entertain the proposal, nor could they agree to a reduction of the postage rate to 2½d. as suggested, on account of the high rates they had to pay for transit.

Charges on Press Telegrams.

The Hon. J. Gavan Duffy said that yesterday he had brought under notice the question of Press messages between Victoria and New South Wales, and now he had a paper, which he would like to be printed with the rest of the records of the Conference, showing the unfair way in which the present system of charges for Press messages worked. It acted very prejudicially, especially to long messages; and he believed, if the system proposed in his paper were adopted and a uniform rate for the whole of Australia obtained, that not only would it be a great benefit to the Press, but also increase the business to a large extent. The Press at present was liberal in its expenditure for messages, but if it had fairer and more uniform treatment he believed the messages would soon almost, if not quite, double in length, and then there would be a great increase in the revenue derived from Press messages. He would not move any formal motion, as the President had already said he would take this matter into his favourable consideration; and, if his memorandum were perused, the fairness of the change he contemplated would be seen. The following were the differential rates charged in Victoria: To New South Wales, 3s.; to Queensland, 4s. 6d.; to South Australia, 3s.; to Western Australia, 4s. 6d. The charges to Queensland and Western Australia amounted to over a ½d. a word, which was an immense charge, seeing the extent to which Press messages were sent. The rates in the various colonies were fair enough, but when messages required to be sent from colony to colony—and it was desirable that every facility should be given for this—the charges pressed too severely. His memorandum showed the present charges to be excessive, the practice being to charge on the hundred-word rate, and he would recommend that a fractional charge on twenty-five words be adopted, which would be fairer. The charges now made practically amounted to a heavy taxation. A fair rate would be 4d. for every twenty-five words throughout the colonies. He would not move a motion formally, but would be glad if Sir John Bray would bring the matter specially under the notice of the Postal Department of his colony. The President had already promised to do the same; and in Victoria he would be glad to join in anything the other colonies might do in that direction. Once the three colonies named agreed, he believed the others would fall in with their ideas; Tasmania and New Zealand being cable colonies, were not, of course, on the same footing.

The Hon. D. O'Connor said, as regards the rates of Press telegrams, he heartily sympathised with the object Mr. Duffy had in view; and one of the beneficial results which he looked forward to from this Conference was to see the increased information that would be imparted throughout Australasia and the rest of the world by means of telegraph communication. Nothing would bring the colonies closer together, and closer to the Old Country, than a liberal transmission of messages to and from the Home Country; for, after all, very little was known of us there; and what would be true of England would apply in a double sense to other countries. He was thoroughly in favour of a reduction of rates; for, while favouring a postage on newspapers, he would yet like to see newspapers getting every facility to use the telegraph lines for the acquisition of news. He promised Mr. Duffy this matter should have his attention, and immediately. Before this week was out he would enter into the matter and see what could be done.

The Hon. B. S. Bird congratulated Mr. Duffy on having brought the matter forward. The more facilities they afforded by telegraph the better for the colonies themselves. He would like to say, on behalf of Tasmania, they would be very glad to do their best also to try and reduce the rates. The distance of the Straits between Victoria and Tasmania necessarily rendered messages more costly than between any of the colonies in the group. They charged 9d. in Tasmania for a hundred words, and the cable charge was 2s.; but under arrangement with the Eastern Extension Company Sir John Pender had agreed to reduce the rates provided a certain amount of business was done, and he trusted, therefore, they would soon be in a position to give effect to a general reduction of rate.

Sir John Bray said, as far as South Australia was concerned, they recognised the desirability of having the rates for Press telegrams as low as they fairly could, and he would look carefully into the matter, and if possible to make any reduction they would do it. They would have to