

The HON. A. WYNNE (V.): I second it.

Mr. C. TODD (S.A.): There can be no doubt that the present overland transit rates in the United States are extravagantly high, and that this Conference should do all it possibly can, probably through the London office, to get them reduced. I think we must all concur in the opinion that it is very hard indeed that the United States should so long persistently refuse to assist this mail service. Some time ago New South Wales and Victoria entered into a special arrangement with the United States, but my Government were deterred from joining, because they considered that the convention entered into was entirely one-sided. As a matter of fact, the Australian colonies, which were not parties to the convention, had to pay for the carriage of letters each way; we had to pay 1s. 7d. per lb. on letters fully prepaid from the United States, because the Government of that country refused to contribute to the service. I know that that has since been done away with, but I mention the fact to show that throughout the United States has maintained an ungenerous attitude towards the Australian colonies, and I think we cannot do better than pass the motion.

The HON. J. G. WARD (N.Z.): I omitted to state that the overland transit rates are 55 cents, or 2s. 8½d. per lb. on letters, and 17 cents, or 8½d. per lb. for other articles. The charges at Postal Union rates would be very low by comparison—namely, 8½d. per lb., as against 2s. 8½d. per lb. for letters, and 1½d. per lb. for other articles, as against 8½d.; as a matter of fact, the overland transit rates amount to above 70 per cent. of the total postage.

Question put and passed.

6. HOUR ZONE TIME.

Mr. J. McDONNELL (Q.) said that the heads of Departments had not been able to bring up a report upon this question, but he believed that Mr. Todd was prepared to make a statement.

Mr. C. TODD (S.A.): If it is desired that this matter should be postponed, I will not say anything now; but what I have to say will occupy only a few minutes. I may say, in the first instance, that I explained the whole thing at the Conference held in Sydney in 1891, when it was referred for further consideration to the heads of the Telegraph Departments, the Railway Departments, and the Government Astronomers of the different colonies. Briefly, the question is this: There is a very general feeling which has arisen out of the action taken by Mr. Sandford Fleming in Canada, that the earth should be divided into hour zones, each zone extending over 7½ degrees on either side of each 15th degree of longitude or hour meridian. The hour meridians which pass through Australia are the 120th, which passes through Western Australia, and is 8 hours in advance of Greenwich time; the 135th, which almost bisects the continent, and is 9 hours east from Greenwich; and the 150th, which passes through the eastern portion of New South Wales and Queensland. Following out the hour zone system, if the colonies thought fit to adopt it, instead of the difference of time, calculated in minutes and seconds, which are very perplexing, we should have three times—8 hours, 9 hours, and 10 hours east of Greenwich; and in view of the fact that through the telegraph we have communications of an urgent commercial nature to and from all the commercial centres of the world, I think that this system would be a very great convenience to persons using the telegraph. People in London receiving telegrams from Australia would know that they must make an allowance of 8 hours in the case of Western Australia, 9 hours in the case of South Australia, and 10 hours in the case of Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland; and I think you will agree that that is a far simpler arrangement than having the difference in longitude or time in hours and minutes as at present. The system prevailing in the different colonies is this: The whole of South Australia, though it extends over 48 minutes, adopts Adelaide time throughout; the whole of New South Wales, though its territory extends so far westward, adopts Sydney time; and I understand that Queensland, in regard to its railways, adopts three different times. Following the practice of the other colonies, Queensland, though its longitude extends from 138 degrees to 152 degrees or 153 degrees, would adopt Brisbane time. At a recent conference of surveyors, held in Melbourne in November last, at which I was present, this matter came under consideration at the instance of Queensland. Mr. McDowall and the Hon. Mr. Gregory urged its adoption, and the following resolution was passed:—

“That for this purpose the true mean time on the 150th meridian east of Greenwich should be adopted as the standard time for all railway, telegraphic, and other purposes, and that it should be made the legal standard of time within the colonies of New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, and Queensland. Also, that South Australia should adopt the same time, or the mean time of the 135th meridian, which is exactly one hour later; and that Western Australia should adopt the mean time of the 120th meridian, which is two hours later.”

Looking at Australia as a whole, and having regard to the convenience of the public—seeing, too, that the colonies of South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland are all connected by railway—I must confess that I think it would be better if we adopted only one time, either the 9th hour or the 10th hour. The 9th hour would appear to be the best, because the 135th meridian or centre of the 9th hour zone almost bisects the continent of Australia. The only inconvenience caused by adopting the 135th meridian would be that when the clock struck 9 in Brisbane it would be 10 o'clock or a little past 10, and when it struck 9 at Perth our friends in Perth would know it was 8 o'clock. The name we give to an hour is not of very much consequence. What we do in practical life is to adapt our movements to the duration of daylight. The sun itself is not a correct timekeeper, in one sense. There is a large and varying equation of time, because the sun sometimes passes the meridian before 12 o'clock, and sometimes after 12 o'clock; but we do not find any inconvenience from that. So long as we made all our arrangements accord with what we knew would be the actual hour of the day, whatever the clock might strike, I do not think the difference would cause any practical difficulty. We do not feel any difficulty in South Australia, where we have a range of 48 minutes. In New South Wales there is no difficulty. At Broken Hill there are three times prevailing. The Post and Telegraph Office adopts Sydney time, which is 50 minutes in advance of Adelaide; at the railway station, Adelaide time is kept; whilst at the mines they keep local time. The question for the Conference to consider is this: Are we prepared to go in for the adoption of the hour zone principle in
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