

was altered to Saturday. The matter was again referred to the permanent heads of departments, and the time was again altered to Thursday, or if possible, Friday, to meet the wishes as far as possible of Western Australia. I think it is a pity we should have all this oscillation from one day to another, and so I will ask Sir John Forrest to accept this—

“That in the new mail contracts the day for leaving Adelaide for England shall be fixed so as to allow replies to be received from Queensland, and so that Sunday work at the various ports of call be avoided.”

I beg to move that as an amendment.

Mr THYNNE I will second the amendment *pro formâ*, in order that the matter may be fully discussed. It seems to me that the proposal of Sir John Forrest is one that will best suit the whole of the Colonies. At present we are in Queensland in the very awkward position of having to close our mail on Friday, two days before the incoming mail is delivered, and the mails even then do not leave Sydney until Monday night. As far as I can see, Saturday as a day of departure is likely to suit all the Colonies best. We could thus close our mails on Tuesday evening, and have the whole day to reply to the incoming letters, and avoid Sunday work. It is not so important to the Colonies to get replies from England as to send replies there.

Mr COOK I think Sir John Forrest's proposal is quite reasonable, as it is only intended to come into operation when the new contracts are entered into.

The PRESIDENT I think if Dr. Cockburn were to withdraw his amendment it would be better under the circumstances. Though the logic is on his side, Sir John Forrest's proposal only affects future contracts, and by passing it we would not be doing any executive act. The second portion of the motion goes in my opinion rather further than is necessary or desirable, so I will ask him to consider the convenience of the mail steamers too, and not press the matter.

After further discussion, Sir John Forrest altered his motion in the second paragraph to provide for steamers remaining in port for 6 hours, and striking out the words “at noon” in the third paragraph. The motion, as amended, was agreed to.

#### *Australian Cable Guarantees.*

The Conference then went into Committee to consider the Australian Cable Guarantees.

#### *Adjournment.*

At 12:30 P.M. the Conference adjourned until 10 A.M. next day

THURSDAY, 7TH FEBRUARY, 1895.

#### *The Federal Mail Contracts.*

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 11:40 A.M.

Mr COOK Mr. President, I regret in connection with the matter of the Federal Mail Contracts—an all-important one to the Australasian Colonies—the authorities at Home did not see their way clear to make some greater concessions than they have done with respect to the extension of the mail contract. This extension is desired by the London Post Office so that the termination of our contract may be concurrent with the termination of that for the Eastern mails. That, I presume, is not only satisfactory to the London Post Office but also to the companies interested. If, therefore, such arrangements as that be agreed to by this Conference, it does appear to me, having in view the very different conditions now obtaining to those which obtained at the time this mail service was entered into, they might have been a little more liberal in the concessions which they proposed to give us. Out of the total of ten conditions laid down at the Wellington Conference, the Home authorities propose to concede two only. Perhaps on this point, Mr President, it would be well if I read the intimation received from the London Post Office in answer to a cablegram sent Home asking how many of these concessions would be made. The reply, Mr President, is as follows:—

“Agents-General conferred with Committee of Post Office urging views of Wellington Conference. Post Office then conferred companies, who agreed from first February, 1896, to include parcel post in contract, and guaranteed invariable call at Colombo. Post Office will extend contract two years, and write Colonies shortly on paragraphs 3, 4, 5, 6 of recommendation Conference, with every desire to meet wishes of Colonies.”

It would seem to me, Sir, there is not much desire on the part of the Home Office to assist us. They propose to give us only two out of the ten concessions asked for—and of those two concessions which they propose to make to us they are not by any means the most important, but it appears to me that we are somewhat in a difficulty with respect to these contracts. To call for fresh tenders now would, I presume, only be placing ourselves and the Colonies we represent at the mercy of these companies, unless in the meantime some steamship company come in to make the running and