

It appears to the Committee, therefore, that, from the point of view of national and public interests, rejection presents serious drawbacks, and that postponement is even less defensible.

Ratification.

These alternatives being disposed of, the Committee proceed to set out the effect of the adhesion of this country to the Convention. Many of the advantages attending ratification have been stated in the body of the report. The principal of those advantages may be summarised as follows:—

The primary object of the Convention is to facilitate and promote the use of wireless telegraphy, especially for maritime purposes—a matter essentially of an international character and, having regard to her predominant maritime interests, of high importance and benefit to this country.

(1.) The Convention facilitates the use of wireless telegraphy by providing international arrangements for rules of working, control, licensing of operators, efficiency of apparatus, collection of charges, transmission of messages, publication of information, &c.

(2.) The Convention provides the means of preventing confusion and of avoiding interference between neighbouring ship or shore stations, a result increasingly difficult or impossible of attainment, except by international agreement.

(3.) The Convention secures general freedom of communication between ships and coast stations, thus giving British ships fitted with any form of apparatus the advantage of being able to communicate freely with the greatest number of other ships and land stations throughout the world.

(4.) The freedom of communication thus secured, and the protection from interference thus afforded, will give free play to all systems and will thus tend to the encouragement and progress of invention in connection with wireless telegraphy.

These advantages, important though they be, are secondary to the supreme consideration of naval interests and national defence. The unanimous evidence of witnesses representing and speaking on behalf of the Admiralty and War Office is conclusive that the Convention (now framed largely on the initiative of the British delegates) obviates injury and secures substantial advantages not otherwise attainable.

Among these advantages are the following:—

(a.) A general obligation is imposed on all stations not to interfere with the working of other stations.

(b.) Exempted stations are allowed and given international sanction. Certain wave-lengths are reserved for Naval use, so as to be absolutely free from interference by commercial stations.

(c.) International sanction is obtained for such censorship arrangements as may be necessary.

(d.) The effect of the Convention, if adhered to by Great Britain, would be directly to encourage the erection of stations at suitable points in British territory, and the general development of the use of wireless telegraphy in the British mercantile marine, thus providing a widely extended system over which the Admiralty would have control in time of emergency.

(e.) It may be added that the Convention has been framed with careful regard to the interests of His Majesty's dominions beyond the seas, the several colonies and India being able to adhere and withdraw separately as may appear to them expedient; and adequate representation at future Conferences has been obtained for such colonies or dependencies as may subsequently adhere.

(f.) Finally, the fact may be emphasized that at any time, if she finds the Convention to be in any way detrimental to her interests, Great Britain, by giving a year's notice, can retire from the Convention. Meanwhile, if she ratifies, no alteration to her detriment can be made in the Convention without her consent; and it has been already explained that the Bureau has no initiative or executive powers of any description.

In view of the foregoing considerations it is manifest that universal compulsory intercommunication, with the exceptions and exemptions secured in the Convention, is a principle to be aimed at, and one that must be of benefit both nationally and internationally.

A careful perusal of the *procès verbaux* will show that the representations of the British delegation for amendments and modifications of the draft Convention were met in the most considerate manner by the Conference. In all essential points the Convention now conforms to the conditions laid down by the Government with the view of securing national interests. The Committee, in conclusion, desire specially to lay stress upon the observation that if, after the substantial changes made on the initiative of the British delegates, Great Britain refuses to ratify, the result might have a material effect in weakening the moral position of Great Britain at future International Conferences.

The Committee therefore report that, in their opinion, the effect of the adhesion of this country to the Convention would be advantageous to national and public interests, and that its non-adhesion would be seriously detrimental to those interests.

[Tel. 08/389.]

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No. 90.

The Right Hon. the SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES, to His Excellency the GOVERNOR.

MY LORD,—

Downing Street, 31st July, 1907.

I have the honour to request you to inform your Ministers that the Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed to consider the Radio-telegraphic Convention has now reported in favour of the ratification of the convention, and His Majesty's Government have decided that they will ratify it.