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1901-12-11

Senate. -

The President took the chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

#### PETITION

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Senator DRAKE presented a petition from residents of Queensland praying that the Commonwealth Government would retain control of the sale of intoxicants "within the federal capital.

#### STANDING ORDERS

##### Temporary Adoption

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

I wish, sir, to ask whether the notice of motion in the name of the Vice-President of the Executive Council, for the adoption, until otherwise ordered, of the draft standing orders is in order? On the 5th June, the Postmaster-General moved -

That until the Senate shall have adopted standing orders, on the report of the committee to be appointed to prepare them, the draft standing orders laid on the table of the Senate on the 23rd of May be temporarily adopted.

At my instance the question was amended to read -

That it be referred to a committee consisting of the President and Senators Drake, Gould, McGregor, and Sir William Zeal, to inquire and report to the Senate to-morrow whether they recommend any and which standing orders now in force in either branch of any State Parliament with or without verbal modification for temporary Adoption by the Senate until it shall have adopted standing orders upon the report of a committee to be appointed to prepare them.

On the following day the committee brought up a report recommending that, with certain modifications, the standing orders under which we have been acting since then should be adopted until the Senate had adopted standing orders on the report of a committee to be appointed to prepare the same. That report was agreed to. The resolution of the Senate is in full force, and until it is rescinded I apprehend that it is not competent to move this motion, which is intended to bring into operation another set of temporary standing orders. In effect it would operate as a rescission of the resolution, but that, I apprehend, cannot be done under Standing Order 187, which reads -

A resolution or other vote of the House may be read and rescinded, but no such resolution or other vote may be rescinded during the same session except with the concurrence of an absolute majority of the whole House, and after seven days' notice.

If the motion is intended as a rescission of the resolution it is not in conformity with the standing order, as the requisite notice has not been given. If it is not intended as a rescission, then it is in conflict with the resolution of the 6th of June.

Senator Drake

- The standing orders that were adopted on the 6th of June were to operate until other standing orders had been agreed to, and this notice of motion is really for the adoption of certain standing orders. The word "temporary" in the notice of motion is only a qualification; it is an adoption of standing orders sufficiently safe to abrogate the standing orders which were adopted temporarily.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- What was the wording of the resolution?

Senator Drake

- The whole question really turns on the word "temporary." If the notice of motion really means the adoption of standing orders on the recommendation of a committee, then there is no doubt that it is perfectly in order. The resolution of the Senate says -

For temporary adoption by the Senate until it shall have adopted standing orders, upon the report of a committee to be appointed to prepare them.

We have the report of a committee, and it is proposed now to adopt temporarily the standing orders it has recommended. We can adopt standing orders for a time, subject, of course, to discussion afterwards. If, after discussion, the Senate approves of the standing orders, it will make that adoption permanent.

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The PRESIDENT

- The resolution adopted by the Senate on the 5th June was to refer to a committee of five members the question of "whether the committee could recommend any, and which standing orders now in force in any State Parliament, with or without verbal modification, for temporary adoption by the Senate, until ' the Senate' shall have adopted standing orders on a report of a committee to be appointed to prepare them." That resolution bound the committee of five members not to recommend other than temporary standing orders, and limited the time during which such temporary standing orders were to be in force until another committee - the Standing Orders Committee - had reported. But it did not bind the Senate not to adopt temporary standing orders prepared by the Standing Orders Committee. So far as that resolution is concerned, the Senate can adopt, either permanently or temporarily, the standing orders prepared by the Standing Orders Committee. Then we come to the report of that committee which was adopted by the Senate on the 6th June. In the operative part they recommended the temporary adoption of certain standing orders by the Senate. They did not do anything more, in fact they had no power to do anything more, and the resolution which empowered them to act, did not prohibit the Senate from temporarily adopting any standing orders which were agreed to by the committee appointed to prepare standing orders, namely, the Standing Orders Committee. Therefore I think the motion is in order.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Without rescinding the previous motion ?

The PRESIDENT

- Without rescinding the previous motion. I will first of all put the question whether the motion is formal or not formal.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Not formal.

Senator Playford

- Honorable senators have not yet seen the proposed standing orders.

The PRESIDENT

- Perhaps I may point out before the motion is brought on by the Postmaster-General, that as President and Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee, I think it would be a great pity if the Senate did not adopt these standing orders. Of course no standing orders that could possibly be framed would be without objection on the part of some one for some reason or other ; but these standing orders provide a means by which the provisions of the Constitution in reference to suggestions may be carried into effect, whilst the standing orders under which we are now working do not.

Senator Playford

- Has the House of Representatives adopted similar standing orders ?

The PRESIDENT

- They have adopted nothing of this kind, so far as I know. I merely say that in my opinion the Senate should agree to the draft standing orders.

Postmaster-General

Senator DRAKE

. - I trust that there will not be a long debate upon the motion for the temporary adoption of the standing orders. The whole reason for moving their temporary adoption would be frustrated if there were.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- It was intimated by the Vice-President of the Executive Council that if there was- an objection the motion would not be proceeded with.

Senator DRAKE

- When 1

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- When the notice of motion was given.

Senator DRAKE

- If that be so, I did not catch my colleagues observation. I should not care to move this motion if «I thought it was going to involve a long discussion, because in that case the object of it would be defeated. I understood that, there was a general desire that we should adopt these standing orders temporarily. At the commencement of the session standing orders were framed and brought down to the Senate, and a

motion for their adoption was moved. That gave rise to a very long debate, and eventually a motion was agreed to appointing a small committee to go through the standing orders of the different State Parliaments, and to propose the temporary adoption of certain of them with modifications. I was a member of that committee. Seeing that it was quite impossible for us to go through the whole of the standing orders of the\* State Parliaments and bring up a report the next day, as ordered, the committee recommended the temporary adoption of the standing orders of the House of Assembly of South Australia

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Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Is the honorable senator moving the motion t

The PRESIDENT

- Senator Drake is moving the motion : otherwise he could not speak.

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Senator DRAKE

- I will move the motion standing in the name of Senator O'Connor, and then, if any honorable senator likes to move the adjournment of the debate, I will offer no objection to that.. There must have been probably five-sixths of the members of the Senate who knew nothing whatever about those standing orders of the House of Assembly of South Australia. If no objection was raised then to their temporary adoption, on the ground that probably five-sixths of the Senate knew nothing about them, why should it be an insuperable obstacle to the adoption of these draft standing orders, that some honorable senator may not be acquainted with them. They have been lying upon the table of the Senate for about a month. Surely there has been an opportunity for honorable senators to make themselves acquainted with them. It is admitted, I think, that the standing orders under which we have been working, though no doubt very good from many points of view, are in some respects faulty, inasmuch as they do not make provision for certain circumstances that are almost bound to arise in the near future.. My object now is that the Senate may provide itself with some standing orders which will be equal to any occasion that is likely to arise. By adopting them temporarily we shall have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with them, before the time comes when they will be adopted permanently. Some objections may be raised from various points of view to some of the provisions, but it is impossible to arrive at any standing orders that will exactly meet the views of every one ; and unless there is an objection that is almost insuperable, the Senate might fairly adopt these standing orders temporarily. I beg to move : -

That the draft standing orders laid on the table by the President, on the 9th day of October last, be the temporary standing orders of the Senate until otherwise ordered ; and that the standing orders temporarily adopted on the 6th day of June last cease to be of force and effect.

Debate (on motion by Sir Josiah Symon) adjourned.

POST AND TELEGRAPH RATES BILL

Second Reading

Postmaster-General

Senator DRAKE

. -I move : -

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The Post and Telegraph Bill when introduced into this Chamber, contained a provision for the alteration of postal and telegraphic rates by the Governor-General. The scale was simply to be laid upon the table of both Houses of Parliament. Some objection was made to that provision in this Chamber, and I consented to an alteration to the effect that the regulations altering rates were to be laid upon the table for a certain time before becoming law. In that form the Bill was sent to the House of Representatives. In that House there was a strong feeling in favour of providing that there should be no alteration of rates except by Act of Parliament. An amendment to that effect was carried, and was subsequently adopted by the Senate. In consequence of that, no alteration in rates, postal or telegraphic, can be made except by Act of Parliament. It therefore became necessary for me to introduce this Bill in order to alter certain rates in regard to newspapers and telegrams. I may mention first of all that it is not proposed in this Bill to make any alteration in the letter rate. I explained, in moving the second reading of the Post and Telegraph Bill, that no matter how desirable it might be to introduce at an early stage a uniform system of postage in the States, it would be very difficult and inconvenient to do so during what is known as the bookkeeping

period. I also expressed an opinion, in which I think most members of the Senate concurred, that it would be advisable to find out first of all exactly what was the financial position of the Post and Telegraph department both in the different States and in the whole Commonwealth, before committing ourselves to alterations which would involve a considerable loss of revenue. The alterations I am now proposing will not, so far as I am able to ascertain, alter the financial position of the department. That is to say, I am proposing certain alterations, which I think, in the aggregate will give an increase of revenue, and I am proposing at the same time other alterations of rates which will probably mean in the aggregate about a corresponding diminution of revenue. I say "in the aggregate," because it has to be borne in mind that any alteration we may make in the rates may mean an increase of revenue in one State, and a diminution in another ; because we are dealing with six different scales of rates, and are making an effort to somewhat harmonize them, and bring them into uniformity. I have had a table prepared showing the rates of postage levied upon newspapers in the respective States of the Commonwealth, and also the rates for telegrams. I have endeavoured to obtain from the various States an estimate of the increase or the decrease in revenue which each of these alterations will involve. I have found it somewhat difficult to secure accurate figures, because they must necessarily be based upon what may be called guess work. For instance, where an alteration is made in a telegraphic rate, we can only estimate' roughly what will be the effect upon senders of telegraphic messages - whether they will increase or curtail the length of their telegrams. Therefore, I should like it to be understood that the figures which I quote in this respect are only approximate. From the figures I have been able to obtain, I estimate that the charge for the carriage of newspapers, as shown in the schedule, will result in an increase of about £35,000 to the revenue of the department for the whole Commonwealth.

Senator Playford

- Most of that will go to the three States which have been carrying newspapers free.

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Senator DRAKE

- Yes. In all these matters it must be apparent, on consideration that when an increased rate is charged in any State, the revenue goes to that particular State, so that there is a compensating advantage. On the other hand, where there is a reduction in the charge, which is a benefit to those who use the Post-office, there is a corresponding disadvantage, inasmuch as the revenue of the department in that State is diminished correspondingly. Therefore, in regard to the carriage of newspapers, the increased revenue will go almost wholly to the three States which have had free postage hitherto. In the States where a charge has been made for the carriage of newspapers, there will be a slight decrease of revenue as a result of the rates we propose. I presume honorable senators do not desire me to go into details, but I will give one or two instances in order to show how the proposed rates work.

Senator Higgs

- Is the Postal department a paying concern in those States where a decrease will take place 1

Senator DRAKE

- In some cases it is not. If we were to add to the expenditure of the department the interest which has to be paid on the money .expended on public buildings, I am inclined to think there would be a deficit in the Postal department of each State.

Senator Pulsford

- New South Wales is paying its way, according to Coghlan's figures for last year.

Senator DRAKE

- I think not. Coghlan is very reliable, but when introducing the Postal Bill I made careful inquiries into this matter, and I came to the conclusion that if the interest on postal buildings were added there would not be a surplus in the Postal department of any State. At the present time the rates of postage for newspapers are practically as follows : - Free in New South Wales ; £d. for 10 ozs. in Victoria and Queensland ; £d., for 10 ozs., and not exceeding 20 ozs. Id., in South Australia ; free in Western Australia, and free in Tasmania. The ' Bill proposes that the rate of postage for newspapers shall be in future as follows: Ad. for a newspaper not exceeding 8 ozs.

Senator Dobson

- Why make it 8 ozs., when the department in the leading States has fixed a limit of 10 ozs. ?

Senator DRAKE

- I shall explain that presently. In each of the States the charge has been 1d. per lb. for newspapers in bulk to be delivered to the same person. We are proposing what I think will be a very great concession, namely, to take newspapers in bulk, but addressed separately, at a charge of 1d. per lb., and to deliver them separately. The result of that change will be that for a newspaper weighing half-a-pound, the postage will be 1d., while the charge on a newspaper weighing a quarter of a pound, and posted in that way, will be 1/2d. I have had a return made showing the weight of a number of the newspapers published in Victoria. We have had access to the Parliamentary library, but it was not convenient to obtain the weights of newspapers in all the States. In Victoria, at the present time, there are 612 publications, which go through the post as newspapers. Of these there are only three whose weight exceeds 8 ozs., namely, the Australasian, the Mining Standard, and the Farm and Home.

Senator Best

- What is the weight of the Australasian?

Senator DRAKE

- According to this return, it is 9 ozs., but I am told that it is 9 1/2 ozs. At all events it is under 10 ozs.

Senator Dobson

- I am told that the Town and Country Journal weighs 8 ozs., and the Sydney Mail 9 1/2 ozs.

Senator DRAKE

- While I am speaking only of Victorian newspapers, it is just as well that we should not introduce reference to the weight of newspapers published in other States. The average weight of the Victorian newspapers is 2 1/4 ozs., and we may say practically that 1 1/2 ozs. is the outside weight of any daily newspaper here. Thus the charge upon them, when they are posted in bulk by the proprietors or news-vendors, would be 1d., and a newspaper running as low as 2 ozs., as some of them do, would pay a postage of only half a farthing. Now, I will answer Senator Dobson's question as to the reason for the alteration of the limit. We propose to charge 1d. per lb. and 1/2d. for 1 lb. If we are going to carry one newspaper weighing 10 ozs. for 1/2 d., then, to be consistent, we should have to carry newspapers in bulk for something less than 1d. per lb.

Senator Best

- Is the 10 ozs. system so objectionable?

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Senator DRAKE

- No. Previously 10 ozs. were carried for 1/2 d., but there has been no provision whatever for carrying a number of these papers in bulk, and distributing them separately. That will be a great reform, which will be distinctly beneficial to newspapers of comparatively light weight, and that is a very important matter. There is very great reason why we should carry newspapers by weight, because that is an important element. Newspapers are carried not only over the railways, but by coach and sometimes on horseback, and we have to consider the weight of the mails. In adopting this principle we are making a very important concession. It is almost impossible to conceive that we could carry newspapers under these conditions at anything less than 1d. per lb., and if we are going to fix that charge it seems unreasonable that we should allow a newspaper weighing 10 ozs. to go through the post for 1d.

Senator Dobson

- But the Bill proposes to alter the standard weight of two of the leading States.

Senator DRAKE

- The department in each State has got its own rates. We can allow those rates to continue if the Senate does not think it desirable to introduce something like uniformity throughout the States. To my mind it is desirable that we should utilize the bookkeeping period to secure this uniformity, and there must be something like give and take. We cannot adopt the lowest rate which obtains in any State and make that uniform. We must try as far as possible to hit upon a mean which will cause the least possible inconvenience.

Senator Dobson

- The weekly newspaper proprietors will want to send in bulk as well as separately, but when their newspapers are sent separately the cost under the Bill will be greater.

Senator DRAKE

- Not at all. The rate in bulk will be 1d. per lb. If the newspaper proprietors choose to post a single copy

weighing the full 8 ozs. they will pay exactly the same rate as they would by bulk. If the paper weighs less than 8 ozs., then the sending in bulk is an advantage to them. Our postal rates generally compare favorably with those of any other country. To carry 1 lb. of postal matter to the remotest confines of this continent, and to deliver it there for id., is to my mind very 'reasonable. Why the 10 ozs. limit was fixed I do not know. It is not an even fraction of a lb. But 10 ozs. having been fixed as the limit it seems to me that some of the newspapers have run up to it as closely as possible. If 8 ozs. had been fixed from the first no doubt they would not have exceeded that weight. It will be for the Senate to consider whether, because the weight of certain newspapers happen to exceed 8 ozs. at the present time, the postal rate is to be fixed to meet their requirements. A scale of 1d. per lb. is a fair rate in any case. It is a very -low rate, indeed, in the case of newspapers that are not of a very great weight. That being so, and anticipating a revenue of £35,000 from the newspaper postage, I propose to devote that amount, and more than that amount, to a general reduction of telegraphic rates. Then again, in reducing the telegraphic rates, and at the same time trying to make them something like uniform, it will happen that in some of the States a rate will be a little higher than it has previously been. Clearly that must be the case unless we adopted as a general rate the minimum charge in any particular State, and to do that would, of course, involve a much larger loss of revenue. I do not wish to disturb the revenue of the Post and Telegraph department at the present time, if I can help it. There are one or two alterations which I think I shall be able to make by regulations, and by which we shall be enabled to improve the service of the public, and at the same time get a little revenue. If what I propose is agreed to there will be a diminution of revenue to the extent of about £45,000 a year by the proposed reduction in telegraphic rates, but with the increased revenue anticipated from newspaper postage, and a few incidental aids to the revenue, we shall come out about level.

Senator Playford

- Some of the States will come out at a loss, and others at a gain. New South Wales will gain, and South Australia will lose.

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Senator DRAKE

- I have the figures here, but, as I have said before, they have been ascertained from the various States, and I cannot guarantee their accuracy, not on account of any want of care on the part of the officials of the department, but because it is almost impossible to exactly estimate the effect of an alteration in rates on the disposition of people to send telegrams. As to the method of charging, we propose to adopt the plan of calculation adopted in every other country except Australia - that is to say, including the name, address, and signature in the message. That will mean this alteration, that where, as in several of the States, a smaller number of words, not including the name, address, and signature, has been taken for the minimum, in future the name, address, and signature will be included in the minimum number of words. The Bill proposes that within certain limits of town and suburbs, where, for instance, we have penny postage present at the time, or within certain limits to be prescribed by the Governor-General in Council, we shall have a message of twelve words at a minimum rate of 6d., or 1/2 d. per word, and the charge upon each additional word will also be id. ; with this proviso, for which it may be necessary to make some amendment in the Bill, that fractions will be charged as pence. By this means we shall be able to avoid an anomaly in some of the States, which is that the rate per word over the number of words in a minimum message has been greater than the rate per word in the first part of the message. This has had this peculiar result, that it has sometimes absolutely paid people to split a message. By sending what they desired to say in two messages, and making the department send the name, address, and signature free twice, they have been enabled to save money, because they have been able to send those two messages at a lower rate than they could have been sent at as one message. That is manifestly absurd, and the practice adopted in Australia of not charging for the name, address, and signature has led to a great deal of extravagance in that respect. People sending telegrams very often give the full title of persons whom they are addressing, because, seeing that it costs nothing, it would seem to be discourteous if they did not send the full title. It is certain that complimentary phrases are not put in if they have to be paid for, and under this proposal, including the name, address, and signature as part of the message as in other countries, the name and address will be cut down to the smallest proportions.

Senator Higgs

- What is to become of all the military titles ?

Senator DRAKE

- They will all be dropped out in the same way as complimentary phrases. On page 2 of this report the charges for telegrams will be seen. In New South Wales the charge has been 6d. for the first ten words, and for each additional word 1d. This will give some idea of the difficulty of estimating exactly what will be the financial result of an alteration of this kind. Because, whereas our proposal of twelve words for 6d., including name, address, and signature, would seem to be rather higher than the rate in New South Wales at the present time, still in New South Wales at present, if the message runs over the minimum number of words, the sender has to pay 1d. for each additional word. We propose, in connexion with town and suburban telegrams, that the charge shall be only 1d. for each additional word. In Victoria the rate has been 9d. for the first nine words, and each additional word 1d. We are proposing twelve words, including name, address, and signature, for 6d., and each additional word 1/2 d. Honorable senators can compare the rates proposed with the rates at present in existence in each of the States. But this is the result as furnished to me by my officer : - In New South Wales the alteration would mean an increase of revenue of about £1,000 on the town and suburban 6d. message ; in Victoria, an increase of .£190, which is a small amount, and practically nil ; in Queensland, nil ; in South Australia, an increase of £96, practically nil ; and in Western Australia and Tasmania, nil. So that, so far as revenue is concerned, the message of twelve words for 6d. will principally affect New South Wales, and in the direction of giving that State an increased revenue of £1,000. With regard to telegrams within each State, we propose to make a uniform charge of 1d. per word, or 9d. for a minimum of twelve words.

Senator Staniforth Smith

- Does the honorable and learned senator propose an extra charge for code words ?

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Senator DRAKE

- Yes, cypher messages are always charged more ; double rates probably. The result of this proposal is estimated to be a decrease of - revenue in New South Wales of £8,500, an increase of revenue in Victoria of £14,587, and decreases in Queensland of £6,000, in South Australia of £1, 1 77, in Western Australia of £7,057, and of Tasmania in £2,300. I made inquiries with regard to telegrams from State to State, because it was suggested to me that following the principle adopted at the present time we should have a rate from one State to another, so that if a telegram was sent from one State to another across an intervening State it would pay two rates, and if it passed through three States it would probably pay three rates. After the expressions of opinion in the Senate, in reference to the transmission of Commonwealth news in connexion with the press of the various States, what I desired to do was, if possible, to equalize the rates, and to make the rates the same from any one State to any other State. The figures furnished to me showed that that would involve a loss of about £10,000 - perhaps I ought to call it a diminution of revenue - but seeing the great advantages that must result from bringing the States in touch with one another, I am prepared to recommend the adoption of a uniform rate from any one State to any other State.

Senator Macfarlane

- Except Tasmania.

Senator DRAKE

- Of course, a great diminution of revenue must arise from such a change. In the case of New South Wales, the diminution of revenue will be £9,300; Victoria, £6,355; Queensland, £3,298 ; South Australia, £11,263 ; and Western Australia, £6,923 ; whilst in Tasmania there will be an increase of £3,950. In the case of Tasmania, the rate by cable has of course to be considered. There is a footnote to the return - Excepting the case of Tasmania, the estimate seems to be fairly reasonable. In taking an incorrect basis, the figures show a gain in items 3 and 4, but there will, no doubt, be a loss.

By the adoption of the proposals in the Bill with regard to town and suburban and State rates, the loss of revenue will be about £35,000, and if we adopt the principle of a uniform rate from any one State to any other State, the loss will be about £10,000 more, or about £45,000. As I said before, I propose to make good that £45,000 by newspaper postage, and also by one or two other alterations which can be made by regulations. The rate for Commonwealth news will be seen on reference to the Bill. And that rate is

arrived at in this way. When the request was made that Commonwealth news should be sent all over the Commonwealth at a single rate, and that was agreed to by the Cabinet, the rate adopted was the Victorian rate, but the Victorian rate was a somewhat peculiar one. I forget exactly what it was now, but it was substantially the same as this, with the exception that I have cut the rate for press telegrams down so low that the ordinary rate for short press telegrams will be less than was the Victorian charge for transmitting parliamentary news. I have altered it slightly so as to make the charge for parliamentary news exactly the same as that on press telegrams for short messages. If, therefore, a short message is being sent from one State to any other State, conveying parliamentary news, it will be at the same rate as ordinary press telegrams, but if the message is a longer one the rate will be about half -1s. 6d. for the first 100 words, and 6d. for each additional 50 words.

Senator O'Keefe

- H - How is a short message defined?

Senator DRAKE

- These are the charges : not exceeding 25 words 1s.; exceeding 25 words, but not exceeding 100 words, 1s. 6d. ; and then 6d. for every additional 50 words. That makes a very low rate for the longer message. It is not to be understood that the Bill contains all the alterations I should have liked to have introduced. It is somewhat limited as necessity requires, but I should like the Senate to remember that within limits which are really prescribed by circumstances it is to be taken as a connected whole. I hope the Senate will discuss the Bill upon that basis, and I think that if it is adopted it will be of great benefit to the people of Australia. As I said before, it is so arranged that, so far as I am able to calculate, it will not mean any alteration of the present postal revenue.

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Senator PULSFORD

- The introduction of this measure, so close to the Christmas adjournment, is, I think, a decided mistake, especially when an important paper giving most of the details of the present rate was only handed round to us this afternoon. . When we were discussing the Property for Public Purposes Acquisition Bill, the Government brought in some very important financial proposals, which I supported at once, because I thought that they were just and eminently wise ; but I got into a good deal of hot water in consequence, and I think the , Government did, too, and they were glad after a while to withdraw their proposals in the other House. This afternoon the Senate is in a position of inability at this short notice to practically grasp the bearings of this Bill, and therefore it is unable to thoroughly deal with the many important questions it involves. Although it contains few clauses it embraces important details. It covers questions of high State policy, which ought to receive a good deal of calm consideration after a complete study of the various facts on which it is based. But I am quite certain we cannot give it that mature consideration in the way expected of us. The Bill is very largely to be considered from the point of view of finance, and on this point the Postmaster - General most decidedly has not given us that full information which we ought to have, and which a week ago I suggested should be submitted before we began the consideration of the matter. Senator Drake has given us two estimates - the aggregate increase of revenue on the postage of newspapers, and the aggregate decrease of revenue consequent on the action of the proposed new telegraph rates. But he has not gone into the details which it is essential for us to know. He has not told us how much the smaller States would be short of revenue in consequence of his proposals. I, as a representative of New South Wales, object to the proposals, because we do not want any increased revenue. It was a foregone conclusion there that newspapers would be subject to postage, but it was expected and hoped that, concurrently with its imposition, the postage rates on letters would be reduced, as in Victoria, to 1d. per ½ oz. We can afford to lose that money on the letters, but we do not want money added to the Treasury of New South Wales by an increase brought about by a postage on newspapers. It is desirable that the Senate should remember the important fact brought out by the Treasurer's financial statement. The new Tariff proposes to inflict £1,400,000 additional taxation on New South Wales, and honorable senators can well understand that we do not desire to have any addition made to that increased burden of taxation.

Senator Playford

- New South Wales will not have any addition ; there is a loss of £45,000, of which it will have to pay about £10,000.



Senator PULSFORD

- The increase of revenue from newspapers would occur mainly in New South Wales, and of the estimated revenue of £35,000 from three States probably £25,000 would, be collected in New South Wales.

Senator McGregor

-Does the Postal department of New South Wales pay ?

Senator PULSFORD

- The Statistical Register shows that without reckoning the interest there is a considerable profit, and that when all interest is debited the profit is reduced to £500. But whether the department is or is not paying, the people of New South Wales, who are submitting to a largely increased Customs taxation, do not desire any increase of taxation under the head of postage at the present time. ask honorable senators not to be led away with the idea put forward by Senator Drake, that, because the figures show an increase to the Treasury, it means a gain. In one sense it is a gain to the Treasury, but at the same time it is a loss to the people, and we must remember the people in this matter, because the New South Wales Treasury already has added to its resources more money than it needs. Senator Drake has not told us to-day, but I presume he would not venture to bring this Bill into operation at such a short notice as the 1st January.

Senator Drake

- The date will be fixed by proclamation.

Senator PULSFORD

- Is there any intention in the Minister's mind to bring the Bill into operation on that date.

Senator Drake

- It has to go to another place.

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Senator PULSFORD

- The Minister declines to answer the question. I submit that he has an intention, if Parliament puts him in the position, to bring the Bill with all its important alterations into effect on the 1st January. On a previous occasion he hinted at the possibility of doing something of the sort. If he has no desire to bring the Bill into operation on the 1st January, there is no occasion for us to be forced into a premature consideration and determination of the rates. It would be a most improper thing for us to decide to impose newspaper postage on three States which have been exempt, and to bring those rates into effect a few days after they had been sanctioned by Parliament. In New South Wales I believe that over 1,000,000,000 newspapers have passed through the Post-office, and at the present time 46,000,000 or 47,000,000 pass through the Post-office every year, or nearly 1,000,000 per week. Surely it would be a monstrous injustice for Parliament to say, "We shall bring about a change so radical as the imposition of postage rates after only a few days notice." Every one who is conversant with newspaper business must know the large number of yearly subscriptions, and the loss that can be caused by a great change being brought about without giving due notice of it. One great objection to this Bill is that it is only a partial one. We ought to wait until we can have a complete measure dealing with newspapers, telegrams, letters, postcards, books, parcels, and everything. This Bill deals with only newspapers and telegrams, leaving an immense amount of business to be dealt with in the future. The Senate may congratulate itself on the change which was made in the Post and Telegraph Bill making it necessary for the Government to bring before Parliament its rating proposals. It is quite evident that the Government are acting largely on a wrong principle. Senator Drake has repeatedly harped on the idea that there would be so much loss on telegrams, and so much gain on newspapers. Certainly, he admitted that the loss and the gain would not be equal in the various States, but he did not give us the figures showing that in certain States there would be a material loss and no gain, that is that the loss on one transaction would more than counterbalance the gain on another. I believe that Western Australia will be the worst hit of all in regard to loss of revenue from the change in telegraphic rates. When we know that the Tariff is bringing about changed conditions, which are arousing a good deal of anxiety in the States to which I have referred, it would appear to have been a judicious thing to defer any proposal on these matters until the full effect of the Treasurer's proposals with regard to customs duties had been seen. With regard to the Bill itself, honorable senators will observe that there are in it matters of a very debatable character. In the first place, there is the question of the transmission of newspapers in bulk. That is a very big subject. Then

there is the weight to be allowed for each single newspaper. With regard to telegrams, we have, in the first schedule, three distinct divisions - telegrams to town and suburban places, messages to places within each State, and Inter-State telegrams. There is room for considerable debate and difference of opinion upon this point, and a necessity for careful judgment, and perhaps for long deliberation in regard to it. For my part, my idea of a federal telegraph rate is one that is uniform throughout the whole of Australia. Such a rate suggests difficulties, of course; and it would have been better for us to wait a little longer until the finances, which are obscured at present by the changes in the Tariff, had become clear. The Postmaster-General would then have been able to bring before Parliament a Bill dealing with everything of this character, and enabling us, when we were not so stale with legislative work as we are at present, to deal with the question in such a way as was necessary. Press telegrams are mentioned under two heads. We have press telegrams to places within a State, and Inter-State telegrams, the latter being for non-Commonwealth work. There are, therefore, two divisions with regard to ordinary press telegrams, and then as to messages relating to Parliamentary and Executive proceedings of the Commonwealth, we have, what I have said is desirable for all Australia, uniform rates from end to end of the Commonwealth. I have shown the Senate that there is need for longer time, and for a further opportunity for careful consideration, than the arrangements made by the Postmaster-General allow to us. That the Senate may understand a little more of the difficulties in which this question is involved, I will read a statement which has been prepared by the Metropolitan Press Association, which I believe mainly represents Sydney. It says -

The Postal Rates Bill provides for the carriage of newspapers, posted by registered newspaper proprietors, or by newsvendors, at 1d. per lb., and also for the carriage of single newspapers at ½d. for 8 ozs. The 1d. per lb. rate would no doubt meet the case for the distribution of small numbers sent to remote distances ; but such a rate would be prohibitive in the case of bulk parcels containing large numbers to be carried short distances. There is a wide distinction between the carriage and delivery of 1,000 newspapers addressed to separate and distinct persons, and 1,000 newspapers in one parcel requiring only to be carried to and dropped at a particular post town where the agent calls for it and takes it away. The two services are of an entirely different nature, and should be provided for under separate scales. If this be not done every newspaper publisher will be compelled to start a miniature post-office on his own account, and will require to arrange with the Railways Commissioners for the carriage of parcels to the railway station nearest to the post town, and then to make a further arrangement with the coach proprietor to carry on his parcels to the points of distribution. This will have to be done by every newspaper throughout the Commonwealth, with respect to every mail route over which his newspapers travel. This would be a costly multiplication, which could only be regarded as demonstrating the impotence of the Postal department.

The rates charged by the Railways Commissioners for the carriage of bulk parcels of newspapers in most of the States represent about 8d. per cwt., aggregate weight. The Postal department for a similar service would suffer no loss if it carried bulk parcels at 1s. per cwt. , and it would perform one of the most important services for which it exists. If the department does not provide for this service it will lose the revenue which 'it might obtain, and it will not be in a position to save any material expenditure. It will not be able to abolish one single post-office, nor one single postmaster, nor one single mail contract. ' All the machinery, and practically all the expense, will have to be incurred and maintained whether it undertakes the service or whether, by declining to do so, it places newspapers and their readers at a serious disadvantage. There need be no apprehension that large parcels would have to be carried great distances by coach routes, as it is obvious that the bulk of newspapers are distributed near to the point of publication. The greater the distance the smaller the number sent, and these smaller numbers would in many cases come under the 1d. per lb. rate. The service herein suggested might be provided for by adding the following clause to the first schedule of rates, viz. : - " That the rate for bulk' parcels of newspapers of more than 1 lb. each parcel, posted by the publisher for carriage to post towns only, and not for delivery by letter carriers, shall be 1s. per cwt. on the aggregate weight of newspapers so posted." It is reasonable to suppose that Parliament will require the Postal department to render the services to the public for which it exists, and that it will not adopt a course which would compel newspaper publishers to make separate mail contracts, on their own account, as would be the case if the prohibitive rate at 9s. 4d. per cwt. were charged for a service which could be performed without loss at 1s. per cwt. The 1d. postage

on single newspapers should be sufficient to frank a newspaper without such a narrow limitation as to weight. Such a limitation as this Bill proposes would exclude some of the largest and best newspapers published in the Commonwealth. Instead of decreasing the weight from 10 oz. as at present to 8 oz., it might very well be increased to 12 o/., seeing that postage will have to be paid in the whole six States, whereas it has hitherto been absolutely free in three out of the six States of the Commonwealth.

Those are the comments made by the Press Association with regard to postal rates. I will now read what they say in regard to the charges for press telegrams : -

The Postal Bates Bill provides for certain alterations in the rates charged for press messages, the principal alteration being an increase of 50 per cent, in the charges for transmission within the State of messages exceeding 100 words. The present price, after the first 100 words, is 6d. for every additional 50, and it is proposed to increase it to 9d. for every additional 50 ! The effect of this alteration would be that little messages of minor importance would go through without any increased charge, and long messages of great interest to every member of the Commonwealth would be subject to an. exorbitant rate. In the interests of the public the speeches of State Ministers of the Crown, and those of other leading politicians, should be transmitted at the rate which for years past has been regarded as fair and reasonable, and there should not be any handicap placed upon those newspapers which are prepared to pay for their transmission as well as for the transmission of full reports of any matter of more than ordinary public importance. This is, however, the special kind of telegraphic despatch which the proposed new regulation would penalize. Long messages costing large sums of money for transmission are not more expensive for delivery than short messages carrying a charge of only a few pence ! It is worthy of particular notice that the messages upon which this large increase is sought to Be made are exactly those upon which the department already makes the largest profit. An expert operator is capable of sending at the rate of 30 words per minute. He would, therefore, earn for the department nearly £1 an hour without making any increase whatever in the charge. His salary would probably be about £3 a week. What justification can there be for this extraordinary proposal? The effect of the proposed increase would necessarily curtail telegraphic messages, whereas the purpose of the department should be to extend business. A policy of expansion rather than one of contraction should be favoured by Parliament in this important matter. Each of the principal newspapers in the Commonwealth is now spending between £6,000 and £7,000 per annum for telegrams, exclusive of the cost for cable messages. The imposition of the proposed additional charges would not be likely to increase revenue. The effect would be to deprive the public of information it has hitherto enjoyed. It is submitted that the rate for every additional 50 words after 100 words should be kept at 6d. , and that Inter-State telegrams should be made 2s. per 100 words instead of 3s., as 2s. now represents the two local rates. It is a well-known fact in connexion with telegraphic services that low rates lead to increased business and larger profits than could be obtained from a higher scale of charges.

The comments there made in' regard to press telegrams are very noteworthy, it seems to me, and although the general revenue from telegrams is to be largely decreased, yet, in one of the main rates - namely, the press rate - there is to be an enormous increase under the one heading under which the great bulk of press telegrams are conveyed. With regard to federal matter - that is the press matter which comes under the heading of " Commonwealth press messages " - the Press Association say : -

On the assembling of the first Commonwealth Parliament in Melbourne it became important that the people of the other States should be placed as nearly as possible on an equality with the people of Victoria with respect to all federal political news. The fairness of this course was obvious, and the Postmaster-General ordered that all ' ' Federal matter " should be transmitted at a special rate lower than that charged for ordinary press telegrams. It therefore became necessary to define what should constitute "Federal matter." It was suggested on behalf of the metropolitan press that "Federal matter" should include -

Reports and summaries of Federal parliamentary proceedings and paragraphs relating thereto.

Reports of deputations to Federal Ministers.

Parliamentary papers and Bills or summaries thereof.

Order of business, notices of motion, and information given by Ministers for publication.

Tactics of the Opposition.

Ministerial manifestos made in one State to pass to another.

Opposition manifestos made in one State to pass to another.

Federal candidates' addresses, and other matters of a like nature.

On the 11 th September the newspapers were informed that " Federal matter " had been defined so as to include reports of the meetings and proceedings of the Federal Executive and Cabinet, reports of what actually takes place in both Houses of the Federal Parliament, and Gazette notices arising out of Federal Executive action, but not to include comments and political gossip.

This fell short of the necessities of the case, and on the 10th October the newspapers were informed that his Excellency the Governor in Council had approved of the definition being enlarged so as to include, in addition to what had already been approved, the following -

Parliamentary papers and bills or summaries thereof, without notes or comments.

Information given by Commonwealth Ministers for publication.

It will be seen, therefore, that everything has been authorized to be sent at the reduced rate except any speech or action on the part of the Opposition or of the labour party, and that all comments are denied under the penalty of paying three times the amount for transmitting, except in the case of the Melbourne press, which is not dependent upon the telegraphic service. This cannot be satisfactory to the Opposition or to the labour party

If a deputation from Queensland were to wait on the Minister in connexion with the sugar duties the Ministers explanations could be transmitted at a lower rate ; but if the same deputation waited upon the leader of the Opposition or the leader of the labour party their views could only be sent through under the penalty of paying three times as much.

The transmission of "Federal matter" throughout the Commonwealth at a special rate was no doubt a wise and proper concession ; but to set up a distinction between different classes of " Federal matter," so as to favour the Government of the day and place the Opposition and the labour party at a disadvantage, could result only in serious complications and universal discontent.

An opportunity for remedying this inequality will be afforded to members of the Commonwealth Parliament during the discussion of the Postal

Rates Bill. This could be done by enlarging the definition so as to include all matter relating to Federal politics as well as Federal parliamentary and executive proceedings.

I have read these three statements in full, because they give the Senate a very fair idea of the important issues involved in the few innocent looking clauses of this Bill. In my judgment they justify me in appealing to the Postmaster-General to postpone further consideration of this Bill, until at least sometime in January next.

Senator Major GOULD

- This Bill deals only with the question of newspaper and telegraphic rates. Therefore there is some merit in the suggestion that the second reading should be postponed until January next. This Bill has been brought before the Senate very suddenly. It was only on Thursday last that it was read a first time, and the second reading fixed for to-day. The figures which have been produced by Senator Pulsford cast an entirely different appearance upon the whole of the proposals submitted by the Postmaster-General, especially so far as newspaper postage is concerned. I do not believe that there would be much, if any, objection to the establishment of a uniform postal rate of ½d. on newspapers posted separately. It is desirable, however, that some consideration should be given to the protest against charging the 1d. per lb. where newspapers are posted in bulk, more especially if it be true that in Victoria newspapers, in bulk, are carried over the railways at the rate of 13s. per ton.

Senator Drake

- We do not want to interfere with that system.

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Senator Major GOULD

- But if the newspapers go through the post they will be charged £9 or £10 per ton, as against 13s. per ton when carried by the railways. That will be a very great handicap upon the press, and more especially in those States where there is not that close railway communication which exists in Victoria. In Victoria newspapers can be conveyed practically within measurable distance of any town, where there would be any demand for them, by means of the railways. But in other States, where the area is larger, or the mileage of railways is less, this charge will be a very much greater tax upon newspaper proprietors. Even

if arrangements were made with the railways in other

States to convey newspapers at the rate charged by the Victorian railways, they would often be dumped down 10.0 miles or more from their destination, and arrangements would have to be made for conveying them to their journey's end by means of private vehicles or something of the sort. The question of the carriage of newspapers has been a very vexed one. Many people say that newspapers are started as private enterprises, and that the owners should pay for any services rendered by the State in conveying them to their readers. We have to bear in mind, however, that newspapers are eagerly sought after by the public, who look to them to obtain knowledge of what is happening, not only in their own locality or State, but throughout the world. While newspaper proprietors, like owners of all private enterprises, are instigated undoubtedly by a desire to benefit themselves, it must be remembered that immense benefits are conferred upon the people by the dissemination of news. The cheaper we make this dissemination of information the better it is for the community at large. At present a man obtains his newspaper for one penny, and if he has to pay another 50 per cent, upon it, the result will be to reduce the number of readers.

Senator Pearce

- But will he have to do so ?

Senator Major GOULD

- He must do so necessarily if we pass- the rates proposed in the Bill. The price of newspapers will not be increased, but if the proprietors have to pay 1/2 d. per copy for postage they will expect the subscribers to reimburse them to that extent. . We should make the charge as low as possible, so that there may be no ground for complaint, on the part of residents in the country, that it is impossible for them to learn what is going on. The people throughout the country are glad to obtain the metropolitan papers, because they supply a mass of information which it is impossible for the smaller provincial newspapers to give. While I do not advocate the free carriage of newspapers, I think we should make the postal rates as low as possible. If it is possible to carry newspapers over- the Victorian railways at 13s. per ton, is it not unreasonable for the Postmaster-General to say that the charge for their carriage through the post' shall be something like £-9 per ton ?

Senator Higgs

- It depends on whether the Postal department is a paying concern.

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Senator Major GOULD

- If the Railway department of Victoria can afford to do this, surely the Postal department can do the same, provided that the work is the same ? I believe that the Railway department's rate for the carriage of mail matter is fixed irrespective of distance, and whether the Postal department carry newspapers or not it will not make any difference in what they have to pay the Railway department. If there is a disinclination to adjourn the debate, we shall have to go into committee. But assuming,, for the sake of argument, that we get through this Bill to-day or to-morrow, what chance is there of getting it through the other Chamber until after the Christmas holidays? Honorable members of another place are busily engaged with the Tariff, and it is not likely they will postpone the consideration of that matter in order to allow this or any other Bill to come before them. They want to deal with the Tariff as soon as possible, but it is not- probable it will be completed until after the Christmas adjournment. If that be the case, we will not save time by pushing this Bill through before Christmas. We will have plenty of spare time in which to deal with it after the holidays, and before the Tariff comes before us. I should like to emphasize what Senator Pulsford has said in regard to the charges for the transmission of federal news by telegraph. Whatever takes place in connexion with this Parliament, or in relation to Commonwealth politics, is a matter of common concern to people in the extreme north or west of Australia as well as to residents of Victoria. In point of fact the dissemination of such information in the outlying portions of the Commonwealth is more urgent than it is in the immediate vicinity of the meeting place of Parliament. Concessions have been made in order that the press, whether carried on in Brisbane, Sydney, Hobart, Adelaide, or Perth, shall be able to have federal news transmitted to it by telegraph at the lowest possible figure, and I think that it would be very desirable to continue this concession. It is pointed out in the circular to which Senator Pulsford has referred that -

Everything has been authorized to be sent at the reduced rate except any speech or action on the part of

the Opposition or of the labour party, and that all comments are denied under the penalty of paying three times the amount for transmitting, except in the case of the Melbourne press, which is not dependent upon the telegraphic service.

Recently meetings were held in the Town Hall, Melbourne. Mr. Reid addressed one meeting, and Mr. Barton addressed another. As I understand the matter, the speech which Mr. Barton delivered was transmissible under the regulations at the specially reduced rate, but the speech delivered by Mr. Reid could only be transmitted at the ordinary press rates, which are considerably higher.

Senator Pulsford

- Three times as great, I believe.

Senator Major GOULD

- Thus for every column of Mr. Barton's speech that might be telegraphed to a newspaper in one of the other States, only one-third of a column of the speech delivered by Mr. Reid could be telegraphed at the same price.

Senator Drake

- Did that happen? Senator Major GOULD. - I cannot say whether it did or not, but such a thing would be possible under the regulations. The circular goes on to say -

If a deputation from Queensland were to wait on the Minister in connexion with the sugar duties, the Minister's explanations could be transmitted at the lower rate; but if the same deputation waited upon the leader of the Opposition or the leader of the labour party, their views could only be sent through under the penalty of paying three times as much.

The charge should be the same no matter who the person waited upon may be, provided that he holds a recognised position in connexion with federal parliamentary matters, because it is of importance that the public should know not only the views of the Government, but the views of those in opposition to the Government upon public questions. We know that changes may take place and the rule applied to one side should be applied to the other side. If it is a good thing that a Ministerial statement should be allowed to go on special terms it is an equally good thing that an Opposition statement should be allowed to go on similar terms.

Senator Pearce

- And the statement of the third party?

Senator Major GOULD

- So long as we recognise a third party, it should be entitled to the same concession. I hope that these matters will be taken into consideration in dealing with the Bill in committee.

Senator PEARCE

- I desire to say a word in reply to a statement which fell from Senator Pulsford. The honorable senator said that in view of the loss of revenue which would accrue to Western Australia and Tasmania, should the Bill become law, it might be advisable to postpone its consideration until those States were in a position to say how the Tariff would affect their revenue. I can assure the honorable senator that we look upon this Bill as conveying to Western Australia one of the very few tangible results which we are likely to get from federation, and the people of Western Australia have been clamouring for a Bill of this kind for that reason. While we may lose some revenue from the proposed alteration of telegraphic rates in Western Australia, we shall gain by the proposed postage upon newspapers, because at present in Western Australia, newspapers posted within seven days after the date of publication are carried free through the post. So that the loss we shall suffer upon telegrams will be modified by the gain upon newspaper postage. There is one point raised in the contention of the Metropolitan Press Association which, I think, deserves consideration. It does seem a hard proposal that the Government should charge 1d. per lb., upon newspapers carried in bulk, and I am inclined to favour a considerable reduction of that rate in committee. I altogether disagree with Senator Gould's contention that this newspaper rate is going to be borne by the readers of newspapers. If this charge is made for the carriage of newspapers by post the proprietors will have no hope of raising the price of the papers; and the tax will be borne by them, and not by the readers. From all we can hear of the profits they are making, it is certain that the proprietors of metropolitan newspapers will be able to bear the small burden that is here proposed to be placed upon them.

Senator STYLES

- - I do not recollect whether the Postmaster-General told us what would be the loss if the whole . of the newspapers published in the Commonwealth were carried free; as they have been in the case of three of the States! , I am of opinion that newspapers ought to be carried free. I think it would be a good thing for every one to have a newspaper put into his hands

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Senator Pulsford

- It would depend upon what paper it was.-

Senator STYLES

- I know which paper I should send round, and I think I know the paper the honorable senator would send round, but I think they should all be treated alike. I recollect reading & speech by the late Bishop Fraser, of Manchester, in which he declared that the best educated nien" nowadays , were those who read the best articles in the best newspapers. I should like to get from the Postmaster&gt;General an estimate of the probable loss if the newspapers published within Victoria, Queensland, and South Australia were carried free within those States.

Senator Drake

- It would amount to about another £30,000, I think.

Senator STYLES

- Many people have ;no doubt that adult suffrage must come, and in that event ' especially we ought to take every precaution to insure that newspapers shall be widely distributed throughout the Commonwealth, together with reports of the proceedings of this Parliament, j and all matters relating to" the Government of the Commonwealth.

Senator Pearce

- The honorable senator would have to take all the papers, in order "to get an idea of what was going on.

Senator STYLES

- If honorable senators -would, only be guided by me I could tell them which paper to take - if they desired to get a true statement of affairs. There is only one paper that I know that contains good, sound, political matter. An honorable member asks me if it is the Argus. It is not. I take both, but 1 take the Argus for the fun of the thing, in order to see what they say, and what it is possible to turn into the columns of a newspaper. I am not sure that I shall not be prepared to move that we should forfeit that £30,000 in order to have the whole of the newspapers' published of a State carried free within that State.

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Senator PLAYFORD

- I differ altogether from Senator Styles on the question of the free carriage of newspapers. "We tried it in South Australia, at considerable loss to the revenue, and we had ultimately to impose a small charge. It certainly did not fall upon the readers of the papers, because the newspaper proprietors had to pay the whole of it. With regard to postal, telegraphic and telephonic rates, a general principle should be laid down ; and that is that if we carry messages by post, by telegraph, or by means of a telephone, the least which people who make use of the means at their disposal can do is to pay the State sufficient to cover the cost to which the State is put in sending those messages. We should start with that principle and strictly adhere to it. The Postal department in England makes a considerable profit and eases the revenue considerably, but I do not believe that we wish to make a profit out of the department at all. We do unmistakably desire that the expense of sending messages shall be paid for by the people who get the benefit of them. It is only right that that should be the case, and if we are going to send newspapers or literature of any kind we should make those who take advantage of the facilities offered to them pay sufficient to prevent the State from suffering any loss.. Until the Commonwealth has passed through' the first five years of its existence the different States will have to bear any loss that may be occasioned by an alteration of the rates. I followed the Postmaster-General in moving the second reading of the Bill, and I gathered that the alterations he proposes will involve a loss amounting to £45,000, and that there is to be' a gain of some £30,000 or £35,000 on newspapers. When, however, we come to analyze the loss and gain we find- that the loss is inflicted upon a number of the smaller States, and the gain goes to the larger States: The State gaining most is undoubtedly New South Wales, and those which will suffer most are South Australia, Tasmania, and Western Australia I can tell honorable senators that the Treasurer and people of South Australia are exceedingly anxious at the present time to know what is going to be the

financial result of their having joined the Commonwealth. So far as they can see from what is occurring in another place, they fear that their Customs revenue will be very considerably reduced. They can see that their revenue from postage will also be considerably reduced, and the result -will be that they will have to" put on more direct taxation to make up the loss. That is. a very serious thing, because at the present time we have an income tax and a land tax on unimproved values in South Australia, and if there is to be much more cutting down of the Tariff in another place, we shall have practically to double our income tax and our land tax. So far. as I can see, the loss under this proposal will be chiefly upon telegraphic rates, and the postal, telegraphic, and telephonic systems do not pay their way at the present time in South Australia, or, for that matter, in any of the States. Under the circumstances, it seems to me to be very unwise to propose a reduction of Post-office revenue at the present moment. It is a fair and proper return for absolute services rendered, and the loss has to be made up by taxes, not upon the people for whom the services are performed, but upon the community as a whole. The loss of revenue in this department will mean a gain to the mercantile class of the community, the men who send most of the letters and telegrams, and the general body of the people will have to put their hands in their pockets to make it up. I think it is a mistake to propose to interfere with the matter at all until the five years have expired. Each State will then have to bear its share of the loss or the gain in proportion to its population. The bookkeeping clauses will no longer be required, and the revenue will be pooled, and the loss or the gain distributed over the Commonwealth. Senator Drake must admit that the loss will fall most heavily on the smaller States, and that the gain will be made by a State which really does not want additional revenue. New South Wales will make a considerable gain in consequence of having imposed no tax on newspapers. I do not object very much to the newspaper rate. I object to the reduction of telegraphic rates, because the loss will fall so heavily on the smaller States, especially South Australia. If the existing rates contain any anomalies, we might rectify them, but a general reduction will mean a loss of £45,000 a year to the Commonwealth, and it will fall on a few of the smaller States. From the circular I notice that the newspaper proprietors are concerned with regard to the postal rates. They say -

The 1d. per lb. rate would meet the case for the distribution of small numbers sent to remote distances ; but such a rate would be prohibitive-in the case of bulk parcels containing large numbers to be carried short distances.

According to the speech of the Postmaster- General the newspaper proprietors appear to be under a misapprehension as to the facts. They do not see the advantage which he proposes to give them when they make up their bulk parcels. Newspapers that do not weigh quite 8 ozs. will have a corresponding reduction made. It is only right and fair that the bulky newspapers should pay more than the smaller ones. A newspaper containing a couple of sheets should have a little advantage over one containing half-a-dozen sheets or more. The rate in certain States has been 1/2 d. per 10 ozs. What Senator Drake has hit upon is fair because 8 ozs. make half-a-pound. By that means you know exactly what you will charge, and you keep your rates somewhat uniform. It does not occur to me that the proprietors of the large newspapers will have any just cause of complaint when they find that the lighter papers will be sent out at a lower rate, and will reap the advantages which ought, undoubtedly, to be given to them. There is much less trouble in carrying a mail which weighs 100 lbs. than in carrying a mail which weighs 200 lbs. It is not the mere delivery of each newspaper which has to be considered. Newspapers are not delivered by the post-office except where there is -a delivery in the immediate neighbourhood. In our place we have to fetch our newspapers and letters from the post-office, which is some distance away.

Senator Drake

- We deliver them at the window.

Senator PLAYFORD

- Yes. 'There is not much additional trouble in delivering half-a-dozen newspapers. The trouble arises in the country where the mail has to be delivered on horseback or by waggonette or omnibus. If the contractors are loaded up with a great weight of newspapers, as a matter of course they will not be able to carry the rest of the postal matter -so cheaply as they could otherwise do.

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Senator DOBSON

- Honorable senators will notice that Tasmania has to pay the rates mentioned in the schedule of the Bill, and that the cable charges across the Straits have to be added. I should have been glad if Senator Drake



had been able to say whether he has been successful in endeavouring to obtain a reduction of those charges, or in making a suggestion whereby Tasmania might be relieved of the extra amount she has to pay. He has informed me privately that the Government are still ' negotiating with the cable company, but I am afraid that having a contract they will not reduce rates unless they get a subsidy. I hope that Senator Drake will state before the Bill leaves the Chamber what proposal, if any, he intends to make. Tasmania is the only ocean State in the Commonwealth, and some provision ought to be made to relieve vis of the disadvantage under which we suffer.. With regard to the. figures as to the loss and the gain to the various States, I was very much struck by the remarks of Senator Pulsford, in which he reminded the Senate of a very unpleasant experience in connexion with the Property for Public Purposes Acquisition Bill. The figures were put before the committee so late that we hardly had time to study them, and some of us must admit, that we really voted for a most important clause without quite seeing how the figures would affect the States. On this occasion we shall have little time to study the figures, and possibly Senator Drake may be able to submit more accurate figures as to gains and losses. I hope that the Bill will not be allowed to leave the committee stage until each honorable senator thoroughly understands, as far as he can, how his State will be affected. Senator Drake has furnished me with some more figures which may be taken as approximately correct, and which show that Tasmania will make a large gain. I think Senator Playford was wrong in saying that the small States will lose and the large ones gain, because as I understand the matter all those States which now carry newspapers free are bound to make a gain. The statement put into my hands by Senator Drake shows that Tasmania will make a gain of £1,600 under the bulk rate, and also a gain of £8,500 tinder the 8 ozs. rate.0

Senator Pulsford

- Never.

Senator DOBSON

- My honorable friend must recollect that we have been carrying all our newspapers free, and I presume that these figures have been officially prepared, but if there is any doubt about their accuracy it shows that we ought to keep the Bill in committee until we can get the correct figures.

Senator Drake

- I have a note that the Tasmanian and Western Australian estimates are very much exaggerated.

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Senator DOBSON

- The Minister appears to have two returns to each of which there is a note that the figures' in the columns ure exaggerated. We ought not to \_ lose sight of the Bill until we get a more correct estimate. What strikes me is that we shall make a loss of £45,000 a year almost entirely on the telegraph rates, and that £35,000 of this loss is to be made up by the postal rates on newspapers: Although I believe with Senator Playford that the newspapers might pay a fair amount for being carried, and that we ought, in the.' first instance, to make the department pay working expenses, and, if possible, a profit, I do not altogether like the idea of cutting down the rate on cables. The majority of cables or telegrams are sent by wealthy men or traders and merchants, who can afford to pay, whereas- the newspapers reach the homes of large classes of the community, who have not half the income of the others. This matter might well engage the attention of the committee for some hours. I desire now to refer to the inconvenient way in which the charges are made for the carriage of newspapers. I have in my hand a memo. which shows that four large weekly newspapers weigh just over 8 ozs. In "Victoria, and South Australia certain newspapers have been working up to the 10 ozs. limits As the newspapers became more popular and the number of subscribers increased, the proprietors gave more news, and that is a policy which we ought to encourage. With a 10 ozs. limit allowed in three States, the weight of the Australasian has gone up to- 9^ ozs., Town andCountry JournalS% ozs., the Sydney MaU 9£ ozs., and the Adelaide Observer 8£ ozs. We ought to hesitate before we reduce the limit to 8 ozs., and put four large popular newspapers which distribute an enormous amount of information throughout the Commonwealth to the. disadvantage of either paying an increased rate, or depriving their subscribers of news-. Senators Drake and Playford seem to think that because 8 ozs. make the J lb., and the bulk rate is Id. per lb., we are thereby bound to charge the newspaper weighing less than 8 ozs: a 1/2 d But I do not see that because 8 ozs. are half a pound, we are bound to say that our limit, shall be 8 ozs. It appears to me to be far more objectionable to say that the limit of 10 ozs. shall be reduced. While I admit with the Postmaster-General that a number of

newspapers will gain by the alteration, yet it appears to me that three or four of our leading journals are going to be put to loss and considerable inconvenience. Therefore, I see no objection to keeping the limit at 10 ozs. However, these are matters which are more for committee than for consideration on the motion for the second reading. I hope the Bill will get into committee, and that we shall keep it there, and discuss it until we get correct information. The only other work before the Senate appears to be the Public Service Bill, and we shall do far better work by beating out this measure than by going on with that discredited Bill, of which I am heartily sick.

Senator HIGGS

- I agree with those honorable senators who say that more time should have been given for the consideration of this Bill. The Postmaster-General might very well have postponed the committee stage for a little time, so that we might have gone on with other work which is upon the business-paper or which has been promised. The most practical work the Senate could do prior to the adjournment over the Christmas holidays would be the consideration of the standing orders. We might also have gone on with the Federal Elections Bill, which was promised some weeks ago. The Bill before us contains a most important provision in relation to newspapers. It is a proposal as to the justice of which I have not made up my mind. The claim generally made is I believe that it is a good thing for the community to circulate newspapers as freely as possible. If that privilege could be extended to country journals, it would meet with more favour from me, because I can see that the proposals now made in regard to the postage and delivery of newspapers are likely to turn out to be great concessions to the larger newspapers. We can well understand that the proprietors of the larger journals do not see much objection to the proposal of the Postmaster-General, that parcels containing a number of papers under 4 ozs. in weight, shall be carried for a penny.

Senator Major Gould

- - They say that they oppose it.

Senator HIGGS

- It is only the newspapers which have been benefited hitherto by the pusillanimity and cowardice of the politicians in New South Wales, who have not made them pay for the carriage of their papers, that object to being charged. The newspapers generally do not regard the proposals of the Postmaster-General as unreasonable, though they consider that the charge of a penny a lb. for bulk carriage is hard. I wish to know whether the Postmaster-General has considered the probable amount of work which will be thrown upon the postmen when the department accepts newspaper parcels, the contents of which are to be delivered separately to various houses "i

Senator Drake

- I do not think it will make much difference in that respect.

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Senator HIGGS

- If the proprietor of a large newspaper likes to put up his papers in parcels, and the papers have to be delivered separately, it may make a considerable difference to the postman. Some papers may run to the number of 6 or 8 to the lb., whilst others will be heavier. I should like the Postmaster-General to direct his attention to the fact that we charge for letters something like 5s. 4d. per lb. That is to say, we charge 2d. per half-ounce, that is 32 letters to the lb. Is there not a great discrepancy between that rate and the rate charged for the carriage of newspapers? It will be said that the letters have to be delivered to 32 places. Say that the newspapers average four deliveries to the lb. That means that we have eight times the number of deliveries of letters as of newspapers. If that be so, should not the charge be somewhat about eight times as great, which would of course be 8d. per lb.? We, however, charge the people who write letters 5s. 4d. per lb. There should be some equalisation to bring about a juster rate. If there is to be any loss on the working of the Postal department let it not be all in one direction. While I am anxious that the reading public shall get their newspapers as cheaply as possible, I do not think that the Postal department should have to bear the loss, especially as the majority of people who receive the daily newspapers throughout the Commonwealth - that is to say, the people in the inland towns - are well able to pay, and should, I think, rather patronize their own local journals than the metropolitan newspapers.

Senator DRAKE

- I cannot help thinking that some of the criticisms which have been made on this Bill would not have been made had the honorable senators who have spoken been listening to me when I moved the second reading: First of all, with regard to the rate of 10 ozs. for a halfpenny, I think I made it perfectly clear that if we adopt the 1d. a lb. rate it would, be very inconsistent to allow 10 ozs. to go for a halfpenny. It would be something like a baker offering bread for 4d. a loaf or 5s. a dozen. We do not generally charge an extra price for a larger quantity, but rather make a reduction. With regard to the distribution of the papers at the rate of 1d. per lb., it is not only a great concession to those papers that weigh considerably less than 8 ozs., but even in the case of papers that have previously been paying 1/2 d. for 10 ozs., they do not have to suffer any great increase by being brought under the new regulation. Let it be borne in mind that, posted in bulk, the price charged for a 10 oz. paper would only be 1/2d. or just over 1/2d. An 8 oz. paper would go for exactly 1/2 d., but if the paper weighs 10 ozs. it will go for 1d., or 1/2d. more. If it is posted singly, and its weight is over 8 oz., it has to pay 1d., but if a number of papers are posted together it pays at the rate of 1d. per lb.

Senator Major Gould

- Suppose the publishers of a paper send papers in bulk to an agent for distribution, would the department make a reduction ?

Senator DRAKE

- No; because the practice hitherto with regard to the postage of newspapers in bulk in five of the States has been to charge not less than 1d. per lb. In New South Wales, they have had free carriage of newspapers by statute. That being so, the Post and Telegraph department has had to make arrangements to pay the Railways Commissioners of New South Wales so much for carrying these newspapers free, and the price that has been paid is, I believe, 8d. per cwt. In the other States, the newspaper proprietors have been in the habit of making their own arrangements with the Railways Commissioners to carry their newspapers, and they do that still. We are not interfering with them in the slightest degree in respect to the carriage of newspapers in bulk, but we propose to charge 1d. per lb. on newspapers to be delivered to separate addresses. That is to say, we will take the papers in bulk, separately addressed, and deliver them to the addressees. I do not think that Senator Higgs' fear that the proposals will add to the work of the postmen will be realized, for the reason that the papers that will be posted in parcels at 1d. per lb. will be papers that under the previous system would have been posted in separate wrappers. It is not probable that the bulk rate for newspapers separately addressed, will cause such papers to be sent through the post in larger quantities.

Senator Higgs

- Suppose an agent puts a bundle of papers in the post

Senator DRAKE

- He may do that, but I do not think we need fear that there will be any injurious effects from that being done. I feel certain that the general imposition of a newspaper rate will do much more in the way of lightening the work of the men than the method we have/ hitherto followed. Senator Higgs has also referred to the enormous difference between the letter rate and the rate provided for the carriage of newspapers. Undoubtedly, every country does carry newspapers at a loss, and we are doing the same. The rates that are now proposed are not paying rates. We do not propose that we shall have a paying rate for newspapers which could be compared with the letter rate. No doubt it is the letter rate, that produces the revenue, and that enables the Post and Telegraph department to be carried on. We have always admitted, however, that for certain reasons it is desirable that newspapers should be carried at a non-paying rate. I think Senator Styles should bear that in mind. He should recollect that we are carrying newspapers at a non-paying rate, and that what we charge them is very small indeed. Because, after all, as pointed out by Senator Playford, nearly all newspapers are commercial ventures, and the people who buy them do so because they desire to read them, and they should pay something for the service that is rendered to them in carrying their papers' through the post. If they are not required to pay anything at all there is a danger that there will be a great deal of waste in the carriage of newspapers.

Senator Styles

- Three States have been carrying newspapers free.

Senator DRAKE

- Yes, but we are of opinion that that is not a good thing.

Senator Styles

- The Parliament of each of those States does not think it is a bad thing.

Senator DRAKE

- I am not so sure about that. Sometimes there is a party in Parliament in favour of free newspaper postage, and a party opposed to it. That was the case in Queensland where we made a change in 1891. Some opposition to the imposition of a charge was offered by certain newspaper proprietors, but the proposal was carried and no injurious result has happened.

Senator Major Gould

- Did the Postmaster-General support the change then 1

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Senator DRAKE

- In 1891 I did not support the free carriage of newspapers through the Queensland post, but I suggested that they should be accepted in bulk, and delivered separately at a charge of 3d. per lb. Here we are proposing to carry them in bulk and deliver them separately for 1d. per lb. With regard to the nature of the publications that it is proposed to carry, I have a return giving the weights of 612 newspapers published in Victoria. To show their variety I shall just quote the names which appear on the last page : - The Yea Chronicle, Yackandandah Times, Table Talk, Weekly Times, Age, Argus, White Ribbon Signal, Weigel's Journal of Fashion, Young Soldier, Traveller, School Papers, Review of Reviews, Railway Standard, Pastoralists' Review, Primitive Methodist, Messenger, Journal of Pharmacy, Lutherische Kirchenbote, Hawklet, Harbinger of Light, Golden Link, The Witness, Farm and Home, Draper, Children's Friend, Chronicle of London Missionary, Cook's Australian Travellers' Guide, and the Crariboume Herald.

Senator Pulsford

- Half of them are trade circulars.

Senator DRAKE

- When the Postal Bill was before us a number of alterations were made, enlarging the definition of newspapers. I told the Senate at the time that the door was being opened to allow all sorts of publications to pass through the post as newspapers. When we have 612 publications registered as newspapers in Victoria, how many can there be in the whole Commonwealth ? The position we take up, as between those who think we ought to charge a higher rate, and those who think we should carry newspapers free - I am sure that Senator Styles, on consideration, will change his mind - is that we propose to impose a reasonably low rate which may fairly be accepted. Senator Playford seems to be of opinion that the result of this proposal will be that South Australia will have to resort to . additional taxation. I do not think there need be any fear of that. While the returns, which I have had prepared, show that there would be a loss of revenue to Senator Playford's State, if these new rates were adopted, I can assure him that in the department in South Australia, as well as in the other States, we are endeavouring to practise economy so as to insure that there will be no necessity for increased taxation in order to keep the Postal department straight.

Senator Playford

- There is not much room for further economy in the South Australian department.

Senator DRAKE

- I believe we can find some room for economizing in the department even in South Australia, and we are continually endeavouring to do so. I think it will be seen, when we take into consideration the increased amount of business which will result, that additional taxation will not be required. I would point out that we are more likely to obtain increased business by a reduction in telegraphic charges than by lowering any other rates. In addition to the prospect of being able to recover our position through the increased business, we have to remember that there is nothing more calculated to bring the States together and to facilitate business between them than the cheapening of telegraphic rates. Although, according to these returns, it appears that the first result will be a loss of revenue, I think that in the long run the reduction in the telegraphic rates will be found to be in many cases a blessing to the people of the Commonwealth.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee : -

Clause 1. -

This Act may be cited as the Post and Telegraph Rates Act 1901.

Senator PULSFORD

- As we are so near the close of the year, and it is very doubtful whether the Bill can pass before the holidays, I would suggest that it would be better to insert the figures 1902 instead of 1901 in this clause.

Senator DRAKE

- Senator Pulsford can hardly ask me to make that alteration, in view of the fact that the Bill is introduced in 1901. We have to deal with the work before us. If the other place finds that the Bill cannot be passed during this year, they may alter the date.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 2 (Commencement). -

Senator PULSFORD

- This clause provides that -

This Act shall commence on a day to be fixed by proclamation.

I propose to add -

But not before the 1st day of April, 1902.

Senator Drake

- I think that is an insult to my Bill.

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Senator PULSFORD

- Very well ; I will alter my proposal. I move -

That the following words be added to the clause, "but not till after the 31st day of March, 1902."

Three months is a very brief time within which to expect newspaper proprietors in the three States in which newspapers have "been carried free to complete the whole of the important arrangements with their subscribers that will be necessary, in consequence of this change.

Senator DRAKE

- I do not think there can be any harm in allowing the clause to pass .as it is. The Bill, of course, has to go to another place. We do not know how long it will take to pass through that House. Then it will have to receive the Royal assent, and .a proclamation will also be necessary.

Senator Major Gould

- Then why not assent to Senator Pulsford's proposal %

Senator DRAKE

- Because I think it is unnecessary. If we can be prepared to bring the Bill into operation by the 1st of March next, why should we not do so ? When the alteration was made in Queensland in 1891, no time' was given. I will, however, see that reasonable notice is given to the newspaper proprietors.

Senator PLAYFORD

- I suggest that the time at which the Bill be brought into operation should have some regard to the usual quarterly periods governing newspaper subscriptions.

Senator PULSFORD(New South Wales) - On the understanding that Senator Drake sees the importance of the concession I have asked for, and will do his best in the direction indicated, I will, by permission of the committee, withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 6 -

Postage rates for the conveyance of newspapers posted within the Commonwealth shall be as set out in the first schedule to this Act.

Senator PULSFORD

- In order to make clause 6 uniform with clause 7, I move -

That the word "postage" be omitted, with a view to insert in lieu thereof the word " The."

Senator STYLES

- I desire to secure that newspapers shall be carried' free. There is a reference in this clause to the rates to be charged, and I wish to know whether if it is passed I shall be prevented from moving an amendment.

The CHAIRMAN

-The honorable senator's proper, course will be to vote against the clause.

Amendment agreed to.

Senator STYLES(Victoria). - I should like to give some reason for my proposal. I think the Postmaster-General, told us that the proposed reduction of the telegraphic rates will mean an increase of revenue eventually.

Senator Drake

- That is problematical. It will take a long time, while the loss will be immediate.

Senator STYLES

- I am not going to build upon that, but I wish to say that, notwithstanding that there will be a loss, the telegraphic rates, which do not affect the great bulk of the people, are to be reduced. It is true that they affect a great number, but the great bulk of the people of the States never send a telegram. The same remarks apply to the postage on letters. It is admitted that a great loss is involved in the reduction in the letter rate from 2d. to 1d., though I think we were told that it would balance itself after a little while. I wish to point out that, although the Postmaster-General knew there was to be a great loss, the 1d. postage was carried. This 1d. postage benefits the business people of the States, but not the great mass of the people. Many business houses in Melbourne will save £200 a year by the change from the 2d. to the 1d. postage rate. I wonder how much a man getting 7s. a day will save in the course of a year as the result of that change. Not 1d. a month.

Senator Pearce

- Who- will benefit by the abolition of the newspaper rate 1

Senator STYLES

- I believe the benefit will be to the poorer classes. We were told at one time that the price of the Argus would never come down, but it came down from 3d. to 2d., and later to 1d. It seems to me that, having gone so far in the reduction of telegraphic and postal rates, we might go a little further, and insure the distribution of newspapers as cheaply as possible throughout the back-blocks of the States. We have made a considerable concession to the people who largely use the telegraph-office and the post-office, and I think we should make a concession to the people who read newspapers.

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Senator PEARCE

- If the contention of the honorable senator that the great bulk -of the people would share in the benefit conferred by the free postage of newspapers were correct, he would get some support for his proposal. Is it not a fact that the benefit would be confined chiefly to the proprietors of two or three large metropolitan newspapers in the capitals of the various States, who are already reaping benefit by the practical monopoly which they hold of the newspaper business in their respective States ? It would be playing into the hands of those large newspapers to the detriment of the smaller newspapers in the States. We know that the larger newspapers in each of the capitals are not necessarily the best educators of public opinion, because they take one side of a question, and keep from the public every statement that may tend to educate them in a view of the question to which they are not committed. Where the distribution of information is in the hands of a number of people, and is not confined to a few, there is some prospect of the people hearing every side of a question. This is a sacrifice which the Commonwealth is not prepared to make in order to give a present of £35,000 to the proprietors of large newspapers. It would give the people no corresponding benefit, because Senator Styles cannot give us any guarantee that the cost of the newspapers be reduced. If it were it would be reduced, not as the result of imposing the rate, but as the result of competition. In my opinion the committee is not justified in granting the concession which is asked for.

Senator Major GOULD

- It always strikes me as a peculiar thing that persons will insist that free postage is a concession to the proprietor of a newspaper, and not to its readers. At one time, when a postal rate was imposed on newspapers in New South Wales, I had to pay it, and I am informed that in- Victoria any man whose newspaper is sent by post has to pay the postage. It affects the proprietor of a big newspaper in this way, that it may reduce his circulation, because, while a man may be willing to give 6d. a week for 1ns newspaper,, he may not be prepared to pay 9d. If a 1d. rate is imposed, the man who lives in the big city or in the metropolis will get his newspaper at 1d., but the man in the back-blocks will have to pay 1 1/2 d.

The Bill is imposing a rate very much in excess of the cost for the carriage of mail matter. It is a mistake to suppose that if we impose a postage rate we make the proprietor pay,' or that by having no rate we necessarily put a large sum into his pocket.

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Senator GLASSEY

- It has been stated by Senator Pulsford that in

New South Wales 46,000,000 newspapers pass through the post-office every year. If the amendment of Senator Styles, for whom I have the very highest esteem, is carried, it . means, according to the statement of the Postmaster-General, an additional loss of £35,000 a year. The committee, therefore, must make up its mind to face a direct loss of £60,000. Is it prepared by some other means to make up the loss ? In Queensland we do not favour the free carriage of newspapers. Many years ago I viewed this question differently, and thought that a postage rate would injure a number of newspaper readers in the country. I opposed to some extent the imposition of the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate, but after travelling through the State and getting fuller information I found that it inflicted no great hardship on them, and ultimately newspaper readers came to regard it as a fair impost. I admit that it would be very desirable to have uniform postage throughout the Commonwealth, but I submit that if this amendment were carried it would cause a good deal of dissatisfaction in the States. In every Postal department the greater proportion of the labour is employed, not in the handling of letters or telegrams, but in the handling of the enormous number of newspapers. I value a newspaper just as highly as does any honorable senator, and would deeply regret to limit the dissemination of knowledge in that way. But I feel satisfied that the imposition of a postal rate will not be detrimental to the interests of the people. In New South Wales the Postal department has to handle about 1,000,000 newspapers a week. Vans have to be employed, and the bags have to be carried by train and coach to remote parts of 'the State. All this work is done free of charge. In Queensland, notwithstanding the imposition of a  $\frac{1}{2}$  d. rate, the department . has never been able to pay. If the newspapers were held back for a week it would reduce the work of the Postal department by three-fourths. In my time I have helped to handle and sort many thousand bags of newspapers. It would be manifestly unfair to the States to add, as Senator Styles proposes, to the loss which' must inevitably occur under the proposals of the Postmaster-General. For what purpose are postal officials expected to handle millions of papers, pack them, bag them, and put them into conveyances and vans and carry them free? It is done largely for the benefit of a number of proprietors, and not for the benefit of the people of the Commonwealth to any appreciable extent. I think that the rates fixed in the Bill are exceedingly reasonable.

Senator WALKER

- In Great Britain there is a charge of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. on each newspaper which goes through the post-office. Senator Drake has told us that he expects to make a revenue of £35,000 a year from the carriage of newspapers in the Commonwealth. To obtain that sum through the Customhouse, it would be necessary to impose duties to the extent of £140,000. When it is regarded from that stand-point, Senator Styles will see that it would be quite unreasonable to so tax the people in order that certain persons might have the benefit of free carriage of newspapers. No one here has a higher opinion of the great good which is done by a high-class popularly - conducted newspaper than I have, but it is our duty to strengthen the hands of the Minister, and not to sanction the enormous loss which the granting of this concession would entail.

Senator PULSFORD

- It will be interesting if I quote to the committee the exact figures of the New South Wales revenue last year as given in the Statistical Register part "Miscellaneous." It says -

The total receipts of this department during 1900 were £1,017,050, and the expenditure was £919,913, showing a profit on the transactions of the year of £97,137. Adding the interest (£33,830) on the cost of buildings owned by the Government, and used as Post and Telegraph Offices, the interest (£39,642) on the cost of construction of Telegraph lines, and the expenditure from votes under the control of other Ministers (£22,807), the total expenditure was £1,016,192, making a total profit during 1900 of £858. The number of newspapers conveyed in New South Wales for the year 1899 was between 46,000,000 and 47,000,000. Last year, however, the total amounted to 51,500,000 - nearly 1,000,000 a week. I am of opinion that postage should be charged on newspapers. I believe in payment being made for services rendered. Whilst I am going to use my best efforts to secure what is fair for the newspapers, I am also

going to do my part to get what is fair from the newspapers. I think that a halfpenny postage will not do any material harm to the press which we all respect and desire to encourage, whilst it will have some influence in checking the press that we do not desire to encourage, and will put a stop at once to the sort of competition which the legitimate press has to face from thousands of papers that are conducted under the guise of newspapers, but really are nothing more nor less than trade circulars.

Senator STYLES

- I should like to check an error into which apparently Senator Glassey has fallen. He appeared to think that the cost of sending newspapers in New South Wales was exclusive of the figures quoted. It now seems, from what Senator Pulsford has said, that everything was included, and yet the post-office of that State is a paying concern.

Senator Playford

- I very much doubt it ; Coghlan gives very different figures.

Senator Pulsford

- The figures I quoted were Coghlan's.

Senator STYLES

- I am accepting the figures quoted by Senator Pulsford as correct. It seems to me to be inconsistent to make concessions to those who use the Post and Telegraph departments for sending letters and telegrams, and not to make a concession to the man who is working back in the bush. We make him pay a halfpenny postage on a penny paper. No concession is made to him at all.

Senator Drake

- Yes there is.

Senator STYLES

- The department is going to charge a halfpenny on a single paper, or 50 per cent. on the cost, simply for carrying it.

Senator Drake

- We cannot carry it even at that rate without a loss.

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Senator STYLES

- If the committee would follow my lead in this matter, I should propose to carry the newspapers at even a greater loss, and should still think the country would benefit in the long run. We build railways, in many cases, knowing perfectly well that the revenue will not come up to the working expenses and interest for generations to come. The general taxpayer knows it also, but Parliament, in its wisdom, considers that it is a proper thing to build those railways. In this case, it appears that there will be a loss of £35,000 a year if newspapers are carried free of cost. Senator Barrett has asked me how I would raise that money. My reply is that that is a matter for the Barton Government to consider. I am not in office just now. Perhaps I should be able to answer the question if I were. It is no part of my duty to tell the Government from what source they are to get their revenue. For my own part, I believe they will obtain plenty of revenue, no matter what they say.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 8-

The power of the Governor-General under section 97 of the Post and Telegraph Act 1901 to make regulations shall include the power to make regulations for prescribing the limits within "Which the rates for town and suburban telegrams and letters shall have effect.

Senator DRAKE

- I propose to add a few words to this clause, to make it perfectly clear that the charges for transmitting a telegram do not include the charges for portage. I am not quite sure whether it is necessary to add the words, but it is just as well to make the matter clear. I do not propose to make any alteration in the rates that are fixed by regulation, but from time to time it will be necessary to make the rates uniform, and I merely want to make it clear that this is a matter to be dealt with by regulation. I move - That the following words be added to the clause, ' ' and for prescribing charges for the portage of telegrams."

Amendment agreed to.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.



Schedule 1. - (Newspapers.)

Senator Major GOULD

- This schedule has regard to newspapers -

Posted by registered newspaper proprietors or by news-vendors or returned by a newsvendor to the publishing office.

It involves an imposition which I think is higher than is necessary. It has already been pointed out that the cost of actually carrying newspapers by train is very much less than the Government proposes to charge. I understand that in the State of Victoria newspapers are carried in bulk for 13s. 4d. a ton. The Government propose to charge 1d. per lb., which amounts to £9 6s. 8d. a ton. I recognise that in some cases the department will have to carry the papers by coach or on horse back which would materially add to the cost, and probably there is some expense in connexion with the receiving and sending away again. But in any case I think the rate might be reduced materially. I do not say that we should carry the papers free, but if the charge were one-fourth of £9 6s. 8d. a ton, the reduction would be considerable.

Senator Playford

- It would decrease the revenue in South Australia, and we are losing heavily enough already. 24 p

Senator Major GOULD

- This is a matter in which we have to look, not to any one State but to all the States, and to see where the balance of advantage lies. In any case, we are dealing with three States where there has been no postage on newspapers, and they should be considered in connexion with this subject just as we have to consider the States where postage has been charged. We want to find a means, if we can, that will bring in all the revenue possible to States which have been in the habit of charging for newspapers, whilst at the same time we do not impose a heavy impost upon papers in States where these charges have not hitherto been made. If we were to act upon the principle of always considering the State which required the most revenue, it would mean that the most impecunious State would require taxation to be imposed for its benefit irrespective of the interests of those States which did not stand in the same position as itself. That would not be fair. The amount of money that would be lost to South Australia might be made up in some other way. It might be that the increased revenue derived by the Post-office, through reducing the rates in that State, would almost make up the loss. We know perfectly well that when lower charges are made the result is an increase of business.

Senator Playford

- That principle does not always work.

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Senator Major GOULD

- If we look at the postal rates charged in England 50 or 60 years ago, we shall find that they were excessive. But when the rates were reduced the misfortunes which a number of people anticipated did not happen. The public took advantage of the opportunities given to them, with the result that the revenue increased enormously. So, I think, it would be in regard to newspapers in South Australia. There are newspapers published in South Australia that can afford to stand side by side with the papers published in the other States, and no doubt they would have similarly large circulations if they were distributed under more advantageous conditions. I would ask the Postmaster-General whether it would not be possible to reduce the rate as I suggest, namely, to bring it down to between £2 6s. and £2 7s. a ton of material, working out at the rate of a farthing per lb. I am well aware that the Postmaster-General may say, " We are going to charge 1/2 d. on a single newspaper " - and I do not propose to suggest any alteration in regard to that - "which may weigh only 2 ozs. If that newspaper is posted in bulk the charge will be reduced to an absurdly low rate, and it is hardly a fair thing." In answer to that argument, which may probably be raised, I should like to point out that the smaller and weaker newspapers would receive the benefit. The newspapers of greater bulk would not participate in it to the same extent as would the small struggling country press, but at the same time no injustice would be done to the great dailies. We know that very many people who desire to subscribe to two newspapers, take the local and a metropolitan journal. If they have to pay exactly the same postage on either newspaper the chances are that they will discontinue their subscription to the local journal because the other gives them a greater variety of news. The adoption of the suggestion which has been made would assist the smaller newspapers, and do no injustice to the larger ones ; but the owners of the larger newspapers would have to pay £2 6s. and £2 7s.

per ton for the carriage of their publications in bulk form.

Senator DRAKE

- I think that Senator Gould is mixing up two things which should be kept distinct. He has referred to the carriage of newspapers in large quantities addressed to agents for distribution. In all the States the railways have been in the habit of carrying newspapers in bulk at very low rates. In New South Wales the \* Postal department, according to statute, has been carrying newspapers free, and it has had to make arrangements with the Railways Commissioners for the carriage of those newspapers. They have had to be carried free whether posted in bulk or separately. In the other States it has been done by arrangement between the newspaper proprietors and the Railways Commissioners. We do not want to interfere with that in the slightest degree. All that we say is that the newspaper proprietors in New South Wales should do the same as those in the other States have been doing. It is fair that they should make their own arrangements with the Railway Commissioners for the carriage of large parcels of newspapers.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- The department does not want to encourage the carriage of large parcels of newspapers through the post. J

Senator DRAKE

- I do not think it is the duty of the department to carry bales of newspapers addressed to news agents, any more than it is its business to carry large parcels of groceries. If the railways do not offer sufficient facilities the newspaper proprietors can make their arrangements with other carriers. Our proposal is something different altogether. Regarding the Postal department as a great distributing agency, we offer to distribute newspapers at what may be a high price compared with the charge for their carriage in bulk by an ordinary carrier. Hitherto we have charged 1d. per lb. for parcels of newspapers addressed to one person. Our proposal now is to carry them for 1d. per lb. and distribute them separately. We are acting, therefore, as distributing agents.

Senator Major Gould

- Is it not possible to provide a rate for carrying newspapers in bulk to any one address, and allowing the agents to distribute them 1

Senator DRAKE

- We do not desire to do that. Even if we were to charge 1d. per lb. for the carriage of small bundles to the one address, I do not think the charge would be excessive. Certainly it is a very low rate to fix for newspapers posted in bulk, but to be delivered to different addresses. We cannot possibly reduce it. I have had the newspapers of Victoria weighed in the Library, and I find that the average weight is 2 ozs. Most of the country newspapers, run eight to the lb., so that the charge on them would be 1d. each.

Senator Major Gould

- What would be the weight of a newspaper like the Saturday issue of the Age or Argus 1

Senator DRAKE

- My return shows that the weight of each is 4 ozs. That, however, must be for an ordinary issue.- Probably the Saturday issue of either journal is 7 ozs. in weight. At all events it is under 8 ozs. and they would thus be carried in bulk for less than 1d. each. There are only three Victorian newspapers which weigh over 8 ozs.

Senator Major Gould

- What is the weight of the Australasian 1

Senator DRAKE

- It is under 10 oz., and the postage on it would be 1d. if posted in bulk.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- They might reduce the weight.

Senator DRAKE

- I am informed that there are difficulties in the way of doing that.

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Senator Dobson

- The press circular is correct, then, in stating that the reduction of the limit would cause considerable inconvenience 1

Senator DRAKE

- We are reducing the 10 ozs. limit in order to bring about uniformity. We are making a great concession by agreeing to carry newspapers in bulk, although addressed separately, at 1d. per lb., and if this proposal is carried, we cannot in reason allow any particular newspaper weighing 10 ozs. to be carried for 1d. in bulk. We should be charging a higher price wholesale than retail.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- It seems to me that the concession which is being made is a very great one. From what I can gather, the present condition is that a charge is made in all the States, except New South Wales, for the carriage of newspapers in bulk. That does not involve the distribution of the newspapers. This is, therefore, an enormous concession, and the committee should consider whether it is advisable to agree to it. For instance, take the case of a newspaper like the Australasian, which, it is said, weighs 9½ ozs. Only one copy of that paper can be delivered for that charge. The bulk would be made up in an aliquot number of lbs., but a single copy of the Australasian would be delivered at the rate of 1d. per lb. In the case of newspapers weighing only 2 ozs., however, eight copies would be deliverable for the same money. Let us take the case of so-called trade circulars which come within the definition of newspapers. We might have a very large number of them delivered for 1d. per lb., and that would be grossly unfair. The Postal department would become delivery agents for mercantile houses in respect of scores of single-sheet circulars. I have no objection whatever to the rate being fixed at so much per lb. for postage on newspapers in the bulk going to an agent. I quite agree with the Postmaster-General that it is not desirable for the Postal department to encourage the despatch of newspapers in bulk as if they were so much merchandise. That is not its function. I have no objection to this rate of 1d. per lb. which has existed hitherto in five out of six of the States ; but I object to the Postal department undertaking the responsibility of delivering these newspapers, whether heavy or light, to all the persons to whom they may be addressed. The result may be that newspaper proprietors will put bales of 24 p z newspapers into the Post-office each addressed to a separate subscriber, and then ask the department to undertake the responsibility of delivering each newspaper. I think the abolition of the system in force in New South Wales is necessary. It is unfair to the taxpayers, as it compels them to pay for the delivery of newspapers to other people at a distance. If a man living at a distance from the metropolis wants a metropolitan newspaper, let him get it by paying the 1d. postage. We are desirous of having a uniform practice throughout the States and of increasing reasonably the revenue from these charges. It must be remembered that they are charges for services rendered, and it is not a tax that we are dealing with. Bearing in mind that in my own State it is possible that under these rates we shall have a considerably reduced revenue, the Postal department would be wise to leave the charge proposed upon newspapers posted in bulk, but it should not take the responsibility of distribution. I invite the attention of the Postmaster-General to that point, and ask him whether it would not be wiser to strike out these words - " Without condition as to the number contained in each addressed wrapper."

Senator Major Gould

- Compelling New South Wales to pay for the weaker States.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- New South Wales is strong and generous, and can bear it.

Senator Major Gould

- But she is being asked to pay at every step taken

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- We are giving New South Wales a better revenue at every step we take. We do not want this money from New South Wales, and it can be spent for the benefit of that great State. It does seem to me that we shall be acting prudently in placing New South Wales on the same footing as the other States in regard to the transmission of these newspapers in bulk, and we shall be taking a step which will be of great benefit to the smaller newspapers and these mercantile circulars, as compared with the larger papers which have been referred to.

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Senator DRAKE

- For the comfort of the honorable and learned senator I may mention that according to the return I have from South Australia - though, as I have said before, the figures will have to be accepted with some caution - the result of the alteration of the rates will be an increase of revenue for that State to the extent

of about £200. There will be no alteration under the proposal for a rate of 1d. per lb., but there will be a gain of £200 in consequence of the alteration in weight, and the individual postage of 1/2 d. It is not anticipated that there will be any loss of revenue in consequence of the alteration by which we undertake to deliver, because the extent of the delivery will be very small, and there is some reason to believe that an increase of revenue may result from the concession. A certain number of papers are now posted in bulk at 1d. per lb., and under this condition there may be a larger number of papers posted in that way, though the increase in number will not I think be so great as is anticipated by Senator Glassey. I do not think that the effect of this proposal, even in the States where they have had newspaper postage before, and where this will mean an actual reduction, will be the piling up of newspapers in the Post-office. This proposal, from my point of view in addition to providing for a uniform system, will be an immense improvement upon the practice in force in New South Wales at the present time. New South Wales has no newspaper postage at all, and this proposal to charge 1d. a lb. upon newspapers separately addressed is a great advance from zero

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Does not the honorable and learned senator think that he will want extra postmen to carry these huge bundles of papers.

Senator DRAKE

- I do not think it will make so much difference, as the number of papers sent to us for distribution under this proposal will be practically the number that has been sent to us before in bulk. In the case, for instance, of a small country town, newspaper proprietors, in order to save postage, have been in the habit of sending a bundle of newspapers weighing 14 lbs. addressed to an agent, who afterwards distributes the papers. The same number of papers will be sent under this proposal to the local Post-office, and in the case of a country town where there is no delivery the papers will remain in the office, and the only difference will be that when a man comes to get his letters he will get his newspapers as well.

Senator Playford

- It will be a terrible worry in towns where there is a delivery.

Senator DRAKE

- I do not think it will make very much difference. To take the Australian view again, can we have the slightest doubt that the free postage of newspapers in New South Wales has led to the enormous multiplication of papers which is shown by the returns given by Coghlan for 1899- from 46,000,000 to 47,000,000 of newspapers posted in New South Wales. That is twice the number in Victoria. Is it not probable that the reason for that, to a great extent, has been the free postage of newspapers in New South Wales? We can hardly suppose that a greater inclination for intellectual development could account for so many more newspapers being posted in New South Wales than in Victoria. The number of papers circulated every week in New South Wales is nearly equal to the number circulated in the whole of the rest of the Commonwealth. I have no doubt that the imposition of newspaper postage in New South Wales may have the effect of stopping the issue of some of those small ephemeral publications that have simply been brought into existence by free postage. That is what we experienced in Queensland in 1891 when newspaper postage was imposed. It caused the cessation of some few papers, that were not regretted, I think, by anybody.

Senator Major Gould

- I remind the honorable and learned senator that we have been informed that there are more newspapers published in Victoria than in New South Wales in spite of the very much smaller circulation. It has been said there are 612 newspapers published in Victoria, while there are 300 odd published in New South Wales.

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Senator DRAKE

- As to the method in which the postage will be dealt with, I may inform honorable senators of the practice in Queensland with respect to these parcels, which, I think, has proved to be a very good one. A number of newspapers separately addressed are brought in and weighed, and then a docket is prepared showing the weight, and the stamps are affixed to the docket in accordance with the weight. Suppose the number of papers brought in, in the aggregate, weighed 50 lbs., at 1d. a lb. the postage would be 4s. 2d. A docket\* is prepared of the weight of the bundle, and stamps to the value of 4s. 2d. are attached to the docket and

then obliterated.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Is it the practice to take the whole as going to one place % Or is it the practice to say that there are so many for such and such a place, and they weigh so much, and so many for such another place, and they weigh so much 1

Senator DRAKE

- That does not matter. It is not as if, it were a 14-lb. bundle. The bundle of papers delivered may come to any weight, and the postage charged is per lb. Except that some questions might arise at the fractions of a lb., it is quite immaterial. The honorable and learned senator, speaking of the Australasian, raised the question as to what would happen where there was only one going by post. Supposing it weighed 10 ozs., if weighed in bulk the charge would be, as I pointed out before, five-eighths of a penny.

Senator PULSFORD

Senator Symon objected to the proposal which was made in regard to newspapers, not on the score that it dealt harshly with them, but on the score that it dealt harshly with the Postal department - in fact, took undue advantage of it. Wherever Englishmen are found they are proud of their post-offices, because of the facilities they give, and the large amount of work they do in an excellent way. I feel quite certain that, were any serious obstacles offered to a fairly rapid delivery of newspapers in country towns, there would be widespread dissatisfaction. Therefore, while doing all that is right and proper to conserve the revenue, we should be careful how we lessen the advantages and the benefits which the Post-office, by its ramifications and splendid organization, is able to give to the people. Whilst the rate of 1d. per lb. might be fair and moderate for the sending of newspapers in bulk, I think it must be admitted that it is a heavy charge on unsold newspapers returned to the publishing office. I propose that the schedule should be altered to read in this way-

On all newspapers, in addressed wrappers without condition as to the number contained in each parcel posted by registered newspaper proprietors, or by news vendors delivered by the postmen, 1d. per lb. on the aggregate weight of newspapers, so posted by any one person at any one time. On all newspapers not in wrappers, sent separately addressed posted by registered newspaper proprietors, or by news vendors, or returned by an agent or news vendor to the publishing office, the addressee to take delivery, 1d. per lb. on the aggregate weight of newspapers so posted by any one person at any one time.

One farthing per lb. on newspapers, sent or returned in bulk, is equal to £2 6s. 8d. per ton. There is a great deal in Senator Drake's contention, that it is not desirable, that the Post-office should be made to convey large bulk parcels. I should not object if the amendment I have drafted were altered to limit the weight of the parcel to be sent by one person at one time, to 14 lbs., so as to allow newspapers and newspaper agents to take advantage of the Post-office system, where they could not make better terms by arrangement with the railway authorities. There are a great many post-offices to which the railways cannot take parcels. My amendment would leave three methods open to newspapers, first, to arrange directly with the railway authorities for the conveyance of large bulk parcels, secondly, to arrange with the Post-office for the conveyance of bulk parcels, if you like, not exceeding 14 lbs. at 1d. per lb., through the agents and back to the publishing office, and thirdly to pay a penny per lb. as suggested by Senator Drake on parcels of addressed papers which went separately addressed. By this arrangement we should be able to do fairly all round. In the first instance I move -

That after the word " newspapers" the words " in addressed wrappers " be inserted."

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Senator DRAKE

- I could not possibly accept the amendment. It means that in five of the six States we shall reduce the rate for bulk parcels from One penny to one farthing per lb. simply to enable the proprietors to send their newspapers in bulk to the agents. One penny per lb. is the lowest rate we can possibly fix. In the case of the five States we make a very great concession by consenting to deliver the newspapers separately, and that is made a stepping-stone for a demand that we shall accept one fourth the amount if they are transmitted in bulk. The proprietors can get their newspapers carried on the railways at a very low rate, but Senator Pulsford proposes that wherever our postal service extends we shall carry newspapers in bulk and deliver them for one farthing per lb. It is to be borne in mind that we have to carry the newspapers not only by rail, but also by coach or on horseback.' There has been one case recently in

Queensland where a man carried a mail on his back. He had no horses, owing to the drought, and being under contract, he put the mail on his back and humped it like a swag. The fact that New South Wales has been carrying newspapers free saves the proposal of Senator Pulsford from being justifiably described as unreasonable. I think we should not be justified in making a further concession.

Senator PULSFORD

- I think the Postmaster-General does not recognise that the majority of the newspapers could not possibly be addressed separately, because they are sent to country news-agents for sale, and, of course, the proprietors do not know who ultimately will get them. The stray purchasers vary every week I suppose, and to say that you have made an arrangement for the delivery individually is quite a misapprehension. I suggest that where newspapers are addressed for individual delivery, the arrangement proposed by Senator Drake can fairly stand, but that parcels sent for sale in bulk and parcels returned in bulk - not delivered by postmen, but only carried from station to station - may fairly be dealt with at a rate which would be equivalent to £2 6s. 8d. per ton. I think that is somewhat different from the terms in which Senator Drake spoke of this matter, and it is a fair arrangement, especially if - as I am quite willing should be the case - there be a concession made to limit the weight to 14 lbs., so that the really heavy bulk traffic would have to be arranged for between the newspaper proprietors and the railway authorities.

Senator FRASER

- One farthing per lb. would be less than the price for which produce is carried on the railways ? Therefore, I could not agree to that rate. But I do suggest that the rate in the next schedule should be increased. The reduction proposed by Senator Pulsford would make the rate only £2 6s. 8d. per ton ; and to carry newspapers for that price is perfectly absurd. One has to pay more than that for the carriage of tea.

Senator Playford

- It depends upon the distance.

Senator FRASER

- If I send a ton of tea to Echuca, I have to pay £5 for the carriage of it. Certainly the freight is less in the case of wheat, because the wheat-grower could not stand so high a charge. But no one will say that the newspaper proprietors could not stand it. They are making very good profits. Therefore, a fair rate should be fixed. I think that the rate proposed in the first schedule is reasonable.

Senator O'KEEFE

- - Senator Pulsford's idea, which is reasonable from his point of view, is that it is unfair to ask newspaper proprietors to pay the same for sending back parcels and returns as for sending out papers in the first instance. But he need not be afraid on that score. I have had some experience in connexion with the sale of newspapers, and the general rule is that the newspaper proprietors, when they have an agent in a district, only send a certain number of copies, as ordered by him. Thereby they obviate what was the previous practice of sending back parcels of unsold papers. The agent orders enough to supply the subscribers, and in many country places one cannot buy a copy of a metropolitan daily paper unless one is a subscriber. The few unsold copies are counted up by the agent and the publisher takes his word.

Senator Drake

- The agents clip out the dates from the unsold copies and send them on by post.

Senator O'KEEFE

- Ist speaking to the schedule, I would say that to a certain extent I sympathize with Senator Pulsford, who has expressed his desire that newspapers should be made as cheap as possible to the subscribers. I do not agree that it is the newspaper proprietor who will pay the extra charge. In most cases it is the subscribers who pay the postage. Were it not for the financial exigencies of Tasmania I should have felt bound to support Senator Styles' proposal to have newspapers sent through the post free. But having in view the fact that Tasmania is going to lose a large amount of revenue, I could not support that proposal, nor can I very well support an amendment having for its object the reduction of the rate proposed in the schedule.

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Senator CHARLESTON

- As to what Senator Pulsford has said in regard to returns of newspapers, I may mention that some time

ago I was at Port Adelaide when I saw a news-agent cutting off the dates from copies of the Age and Argus. I asked him what he was doing, and he explained that he would post these cuttings back to the publisher, that they served the purpose of sending back the papers, and that a refund would be made to\* him on account of the unsold copies.

Senator PULSFORD

- With the permission of the committee I will withdraw my amendment, and move another, which will simplify the matter.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment (by Senator Pulsford) proposed -

That the following words be omitted from the first schedule - " Or returned by a news-agent or news-vendor to the publishing office."

Senator DRAKE

- I have no objection to allowing newspapers to be sent back to the publishing offices at the rate of 1d. per lb., though I do not think that the privilege will often be used. It is not customary to send back unsold newspapers. But I strongly oppose the proposal that papers shall be sent back to newspaper proprietors at anything less than 1d. per lb., because that is a disastrously non-paying rate, and to ask the Postal department to carry waste paper at 1d. per lb. seems to me to be preposterous.

Senator FRASER

- So far as I am aware, the proprietors of newspapers know within a very few copies how many each agent requires in each district, and no more are sent except there is a rush on, -when extra copies may be supplied on "spec." But unsold copies are not returned, and have not been for years past. Even if they were to be returned, we could not reasonably ask the department to carry them for 1d. per lb.

Senator Major Gould

- I would direct the attention of the committee to the fact that the rate of 1d. per lb. is higher than is being charged on our railways for the conveyance of some kinds of produce. The railways differentiate between the value of goods. High priced goods are carried at a rate for which the railways would not carry low-priced articles like wheat and coal. There should not be the same price charged for the carriage of a low-priced article like a newspaper, as is charged for articles of greater value. -While it is perfectly true that all the newspapers sent through the post cannot be carried by train, yet it has to be remembered that it is only the very small parcels that have to be conveyed by coach or on horseback. The parcels which are sent to the larger centres of population will be despatched by train.

Senator DAWSON

- The amendment would simply be a concession to the big daily newspapers in the metropolis.

Senator Major GOULD

- It would not be a concession to them any more than to the people who read the newspapers. If the Post-office charges 1d. per lb. for newspapers carried in bulk, they will not carry any, so far as the great centres are concerned, because it will not pay the newspaper proprietors to send their newspapers in that way. They will only send the smaller parcels by post. By reducing the rate, we shall be giving the people in the back blocks an opportunity of obtaining these newspapers at a lower cost than would otherwise be the case. I do not ask the committee to consider the newspaper proprietors, but the people who live up country, and I hope that honorable senators will be inclined to extend to them some consideration.

Amendment negatived.

Senator O'KEEFE

- I cannot agree with all that has been said as to this charge of 1/2 d. for each newspaper falling solely on the proprietors of the big journals. In very many instances the charge of 1/2 d. per newspaper will fall on the subscribers. There is not a daily newspaper in Tasmania that can afford this extra ' postage. The proprietors will simply add to the ordinary subscription an extra charge of 3d. per week on newspapers sent out in single wrappers.

Senator Drake

- Why send them out separately ?

Senator O'KEEFE

- I - In view, however, of the fact that they will be able to send them through the post in bulk at the rate of 1d. per lb., and that these newspapers will run six or seven to the lb., the additional charge will not be very

great upon the proprietors. I simply mention this fact to show that Senator Styles' proposition can be looked at in several different ways. I cannot agree with the Postmaster-General's contention that\* this is a disastrously low rate. It seems to me that £9 6s. 8d. per ton should be a paying rate if we take the average distance over which the newspapers have to be carried. In view of the financial exigencies of Tasmania under federation, I do not feel disposed to agree to a reduction, but I am sorry that I cannot vote for the free carriage of newspapers. It would be a great benefit to the people in my own State.

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Senator PULSFORD

- The second paragraph of the I schedule reads - " On all newspapers posted within the Commonwealth for transmission therein." I move -

That the word " transmission " be omitted, with a view to insert in lieu thereof the word " conveyance. " In clauses 6 and 7 reference is made to the conveyance of newspapers and the transmission of telegrams, and I think therefore that this amendment should be made.

Senator Drake

- I think " transmission " is good enough.

Amendment negatived. .

Senator FRASER

- I move -

That the word "eight" in the second column of the first schedule be omitted, with a view to insert in lieu thereof the word "ten."

Hitherto the limit in this State, and also in South Australia and Queensland, has been 10 ozs., but under this schedule it is proposed to allow only 8 ozs. to be carried for ½d. As the weekly papers weigh more than 8 ozs., the proposal in the schedule as it stands will double their postage at once. It will double the postage on such papers as the Australasian, the Town and Country Journal, the Sydney Mail, and the Adelaide Observer. That would be unreasonable. Surely a difference of 2 ozs. is not very great ! The Postmaster-General should agree to allow newspapers weighing 10 ozs. to be transmitted at the present rates.

Senator DRAKE

- Senator Fraser apparently has not heard my explanation in regard to this matter. The reason - and it ought to be an all - sufficient reason - for not increasing the limit from 8 to 10 ozs. is that if we did so we should allow a single newspaper to be carried at a lower rate than that charged for it when carried in bulk. That seems to be absurd. The rate of postage will not be doubled except in the case of newspapers weighing over 8 ozs. which are posted singly. If they are posted in bulk by the proprietors or agents, the charge for the Australasian and other papers mentioned by Senator Eraser will not be 1d., but five-eighths of 1d. per copy, if the newspaper is exactly 10 ozs. in weight. If they are re-posted subsequently, the charge will be 1d. for a single copy, and I do not think that can be considered excessive in the case of a large newspaper, which, as a rule, commands a considerable price.

Senator FRASER

- Most, if not all, of these newspapers are distributed very largely in and around the cities in which they are published. In the case of newspapers which are published here, for example, and posted to Ballarat, Bendigo, or other distant cities, the proprietors can make their own arrangements with the Railways Commissioners, and need not employ the Postal department. But a great number of these newspapers are posted direct to the subscribers in and around the great cities where they are printed.

Senator Drake

- But not one at a time.

Senator FRASER. - A great many of them are. I feel sure the committee will not object to the continuance of the present rate in respect of the great weekly newspapers, which give so much information to the public.

Question - That the word proposed to be omitted stand part of the question - put.

The committee divided.

18

AYES

5



NOES

Majority ... .. 13

AYES

NOES

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment negatived.

Schedule agreed to.

Second schedule. (Telegrams.)

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Senator MACFARLANE

Immediately under the table of rates provided for in this schedule I find a foot note to this effect -

On telegrams from and to Tasmania the charges to be those mentioned above, with cable charges added.

I should like to know if that foot note is to be considered as part of the schedule? It will also be found attached to the second part of the schedule dealing with press telegrams.

Senator DRAKE

- The foot note is a part of the schedule, and, as the honorable senator knows, the reason for it has been discussed several times in the Senate. The cable at the present time between Tasmania and Victoria is privately owned, and under the contract made with the Tasmanian Government certain charges are maintained. It has been questionable, and perhaps it is so now, whether the Commonwealth Government could obtain a reduction of those charges. In connexion with that, my honorable and learned friend Senator Dobson was wrong in saying that I told him we had communicated with the company. What I said was that the matter is now under consideration. The whole question of cable agreements with the various States that have joined the Commonwealth has been for some time under consideration, and I think we have arrived at a time now when we shall be able to deal definitely with the matter. I have had the opinion of the Attorney-General upon nearly all the points, and I have now prepared a statement of the whole matter with regard to our relations to the Eastern Extension Company, the Pacific Cable, and this cable between Tasmania and Victoria. I hope we shall soon be in a position to take whatever action we can constitutionally take, with a view to obtaining a reduction of these charges. Though I deeply regret that it should be so, I feel that in the meantime we are not justified in asking the people of the Commonwealth as a whole to bear these charges which go to swell the revenue of a private company. Another consideration is that during the bookkeeping period we have to debit to each State the cost of maintaining these services as at the time of the transfer, and it seems to me that even if we were to pay the Eastern Extension Company for the messages that go over their cable in order to bring the charges to Tasmania on a level with the telegraphic charges to other parts of the Commonwealth, as the agreement is one entered into by the Tasmanian Government, we should have to debit that State with the amount. If that were so it would be exactly as broad as it is long, and it would be no advantage to the State of Tasmania. It is very much to be regretted that we cannot make our rates absolutely uniform throughout the Commonwealth, but it seems to me that the fact of that cable being owned by a private company is an insuperable objection whichever way we look at it. The only way in which I can see any opportunity of benefiting Tasmania in this matter is by treating with the company, and endeavouring in that way to secure a reduction in the present rate.

Senator Dobson

- W - We shall have to give them a quid pro quo I expect.

Senator MACFARLANE

- I asked the question because if these words are considered to be a part of the schedule, I am prepared to move that they be omitted. I am glad that we have the sympathy of the Postmaster-General in the matter, and I am also glad to see that the honorable and learned senator recognizes that it would be only equity to provide for uniform rates throughout Australia. Tasmania is very much a loser financially in this matter, and as pointed out by the Postmaster-General, the loss to the Commonwealth will be almost nU during the the book-keeping period.

Senator Drake

- Yes, but what advantage will that be to Tasmania if we have to debit Tasmania with what we pay to the

company t

Senator MACFARLANE

- It will possibly be a benefit to the individual, and it will certainly be a benefit after the book-keeping period, and will give us the advantage of a uniform rate throughout the Commonwealth.

Senator Drake

- Tasmania will not care to allow the individual to send a message for a shilling, for which the State will be debited 2s.

Senator MACFARLANE

- In my opinion it is worth a great deal to secure a uniform rate throughout the States, and I move - That the words "On telegrams from and to Tasmania the charges to be those mentioned above, with cable charges added," in Part I. "ordinary telegrams," be omitted.

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Senator PULSFORD

- Before Senator Macfarlane's amendment is dealt with, I wish to draw attention to the real substance of this schedule, and that is the matter of charges. We have just passed a schedule establishing a uniform rate throughout the Commonwealth for newspaper postage. Now we come to deal with telegrams, and for private telegrams there are three distinctions - Town and Suburban, State, and InterState. Then under the heading, " Press telegrams," we have two divisions - State and Inter-State - and we come then to telegrams dealing with federal matters, and revert again to the Commonwealth system of having one uniform charge for them. The first division, I take it, deals with private and mercantile telegrams, in contradistinction to press telegrams. Whereas the rates generally for press telegrams are to be raised, the rates for mercantile and private messages are to be considerably reduced. I should like to know from the Postmaster-General whether there is any altogether insuperable difficulty, on the ground of finance, in the way of establishing a uniform Commonwealth rate 1 I am sure that Senator Drake, and every other honorable senator present, would very much prefer to see a uniform telegraph rate established throughout Australia. I should like to point out that the rates as here arranged may work out very unfairly. For instance, if anybody wishes to send a telegram from Albury to Wodonga, only a few miles distance, the cost is ls., as it would be an InterState telegram. If a person, on the other hand, desired to send a similar telegram all the way from Brisbane to Thursday Island, some 1,600 miles he could send it for 9d. That seems slightly ridiculous.

Senator DAWSON

- We must draw the line somewhere.

Senator PULSFORD

- I agree that there must be absurdities more or less, but we get the maximum of absurdity if we adopt these rates as they stand, and if we do not arrange for a uniform Commonwealth system. I should be glad if Senator Drake would enlighten us with some information as to the financial result of the operation of these proposals in parts I. and II. of this schedule, that we may be able to form some judgment as to whether we can really indulge in the luxury of a uniform Commonwealth rate. '

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Senator KEATING

- There is a good deal in what the Postmaster-General has said with respect to Senator Macfarlane's suggestion, and the effect of carrying it out. Tasmania would have to be debited with the actual amount which the service costs her, as at the time of "taking it over by the Commonwealth. At the same time, the Postmaster-General was forgetful of the actual state of the relations between the State of Tasmania and the cable company. On a previous occasion in the Senate, I stated what the position was. I need not go into it fully now, but I desire to refer to two circumstances which characterize those relations. The first is that from the inception of the company's operations in the establishment of cable communication between Tasmania and the mainland, they have received a subsidy of £4,200 a year<sup>1</sup> in addition to other concessions. A subsequent arrangement was entered into between the company and almost the whole of the States of Australia, under which the principal provision is modified to the extent that it is not Tasmania alone which is now responsible for the payment of the £4,200 a year. Some of the other States are participating in that responsibility in consideration of Tasmania accepting a share of that responsibility in which they had involved themselves with the company for the maintenance of communication between

Australia and the old world. The last agreement entered into between Tasmania and the company in 1889, provided that the company was still to receive the annual subsidy of £4,200, being 6 per cent, on its estimated expenditure in establishing a cable which was set down at £70,000, and it was to receive a proportion of the revenue from the messages, and if its proportion of the message receipts fell short of £5,600 a year, Tasmania guaranteed the deficiency. What has been the result ? I have some figures here as to how far Tasmania has been called on, or rather has not been called on, in the last few years to comply with this guarantee.

To very briefly summarize, for the next eight years, this company is to be yearly subsidized with £4,200, and also guaranteed a minimum of £5,600 in messages - total, £9,800. This realizes 14 per cent, on the original cost of construction. There was, in 1896, an excess of message earnings by the Eastern Extension Company over the £5,600 stipulated minimum, as follows : - 1896, £6,818 ; 1897, £7,714 ; 1898, £8,689 ; 1899, £8,717 ; 1900, £8,743.

During the last five years, the company has received nothing more than the fixed subsidy of £4,200, and the State has never been called upon to pay any part of the conditional guarantee of £5,600. During that period the revenue has gone up, until it is now nearly £9,000. A ten-word telegram from Victoria to Tasmania costs 2s., and of this sum Victoria gets 6d., Tasmania 6d., and the company 1s. If you can establish a uniform rate of 1s. for ten words, I venture to say that if you do not increase the messages 100 per cent, you will increase them to such an extent that there will be nothing further to pay to the company than a fixed subsidy of £4,200. If you grant facilities for communication, you may be sure that the people will avail themselves of such, and I believe that the Commonwealth will not be called upon, after the first year at any rate, to make up the guarantee of £5,600. Under present conditions, assuming that the company had cut down the rate by one half," and had done only the work they did last year, in 1896 they would have earned £3,409, in 1897 £3,857, in 1898 £4,343, in 1899 £4,309, in 1900 £4,371. Surely with the breakdown of the barriers, which have hindered commerce between the States, and the growth of communication which must necessarily follow with the mainland, we can reasonably afford to put Tasmania in the same position as the other States. Senator Macfarlane has said that it made a sacrifice to go into the union. I do not rest its claim on that fact. We freely entered into the union, and recognised its possibilities. We do not ask for sympathy, but for justice. With the present state of business, with our past restrictions on Inter-State intercourse, this company is earning from 70 to 80 per cent, over the guarantee of £5,600, which has eight years to run. At the present rate of progress and with the possibilities which are extending to us under the new regime, the administration should have no difficulty in saying "We are not going to put Tasmania in an anomalous position. We are going to see communication throughout the Commonwealth established on uniform lines and wherever a State may be, its people shall be entitled to participate in the benefits of uniform control of this department." I venture to think that the Commonwealth will stand to lose nothing if that principle is followed. I cordially support the amendment.

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Senator PLAYFORD

- I think the Postmaster General will see that his attempt to make uniform rates throughout the Commonwealth breaks down. Here we have" Tasmania placed in a very awkward and unfortunate position, and if uniform rates are established to the tight little island, the rest of the community will have to stand the loss which must accrue. A very great mistake has been made by the Minister in attempting under any circumstances to establish uniform rates throughout the Commonwealth. It is preposterous when one comes to look at the conditions laid down in the Bill. The minimum charge for a ten word message is to be 6d. in towns and suburbs ; to other places in each State it is to be 9d., and for InterState telegrams it is to be only 1s. Therefore, a man at Port Darwin will be able to send a telegram to the far end of Queensland - over thousands of miles of lines, constructed at very great cost - for only threepence more than a man will have to pay who sends a telegram to a neighbour only a few miles away in his State. Necessarily this means a very great loss to the revenue. If a man sends a wire to Queensland from the goldfields of Western Australia he pays 1s. each to Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland, and it is proposed to reduce the cost of that message from 5s. to 1s. For transmitting a telegram through its territory a State will get 2£d. instead of 1s. It will involve a frightful loss of revenue. Not a single telegraph system in the Commonwealth is paying its way, and the additional loss

will have to be made up by the unfortunate general public, the great majority of whom never use the wires. The men who will get this advantage will be men engaged in trade and commerce, and the deficiency will have to be made up through the Customs-house, and in a variety of ways by the hard-working and 'horny-handed sons of toil. It will be a mistake, even in the future, to have uniform rates. When the book-keeping period expires this immense continent ought to be divided into zones, and the charges fixed according to the zones. To charge a message to go only a few miles at the same rate as a message to go 3,000 miles is absurd. ' It is not done anywhere else that I know of. If it is said that in England one can send a wire from one end of the country to the other, it must be remembered that it is a very small place compared with Australia. I do not know whether there is a uniform system of telegraph rates in England. It was a mistake on the part of the Government to interfere in this matter at all. We in the smaller States are standing to lose a large amount of money. The Postmaster-General informs us that the estimate which he has given us is of doubtful authenticity, but as far as he can guess the loss will be £45,000. I question whether it will not be in excess of that. We in South Australia cannot afford to lose that money. In fact, at the present moment we do not know how we shall stand, because there is another financial problem before another House, which may turn out in a manner that will add further to our troubles. The proposal of the Government is a mistake in principle. If they want to do anything of the sort, they should adopt the zone system, and charge uniform rates within the zone ; but they should not have one uniform rate for telegrams for the whole continent. Look at the line which has been constructed from Adelaide to Port Darwin. It cost £600,000. Yet a man in Port Darwin will only pay 3d. more for his telegram to Carpentaria than a man in South Australia, who is sending a message to a person a few streets away. The Port Darwin man's telegram will have to go through South Australia, through Victoria, through New South Wales, and through Queensland to Carpentaria. The extra charge will only be 3d. It is preposterous. We are sorry for Tasmania, and regret that she has tied herself up for so many years in regard to the cable. But Tasmania knew what she was doing when she entered into that arrangement on such terms. She cannot ask the Commonwealth, until the bookkeeping period expires, to pay the extra cost. In fact, this proposal " won't wash." When a telegram is sent from Western Australia only 1s. will be paid on it. It will be taken through South Australia, which will want her share. Then Victoria will want something. What will be left to pay for the cable, and how much will remain for the Tasmanian Government ? Practically nothing. Therefore, I intend to vote against this schedule altogether.

Senator Major GOULD

- So far as concerns the amendment of the Tasmanian representatives, if they are satisfied to have these words omitted, it will be a reasonable thing to agree to, because I understand that during the bookkeeping period whatever loss may accrue will really be chargeable against that State, and not against the Commonwealth. If that be the case, and if the Tasmanian senators wish the words to be omitted, surely the committee will have no objection to falling in with their suggestion. At any rate it is a reasonable thing that within the Commonwealth itself there should be a uniform rate. I do not agree with the remarks of Senator Playford as to the undesirability of having one rate all over the Commonwealth. Whenever there has been an attempt to cheapen the carriage of letters there has always been the same objection as to the ruinous consequences that would follow. . In the early stages of postal communication, there were different rates, according to the distances which letters had to be carried. It seemed to be reasonable enough that if a letter were to be carried 1,000 miles, it should pay more than one which had to be carried 500 yards.

Senator Playford

- There are different charges now. If a letter is sent from London to Australia, it pays more than a letter sent from London to Manchester.

Senator Major GOULD

- That is simply because the Australian States have objected to a uniform Imperial rate of postage. But one can send a letter from one end of Victoria to another for 1d., or from one end of New South Wales to the other for 2d. There is also a uniform rate in South Australia. In fact, we have given up the idea of having rates for the carriage of letters, according to the distances they have to be carried. It may seem to Senator Playford to be absurd to carry a letter from one end of the State to the other for the same price that is charged for sending a letter from one town to another, 30 or 40 miles away. But the principle laid down by the community generally, was that there should be a uniform postal rate within the radius of each

State, while the States were separate entities, and were foreign to one another. But now we have got beyond that stage, and have entered into a union ; and is it not a reasonable thing that we should embrace this opportunity, not only for the cheap carriage of letters, but the uniform despatch of telegrams, so that, from one end of the Commonwealth to the other, there shall be one uniform charge 1

Senator Drake

- What does the honorable senator say that should be ?

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Senator Major GOULD

- The Government say Is. I admit that there may be some amount of loss if only the same number of telegrams are carried as have hitherto been carried, but we may expect that the cheapening of telegraph communication will increase the amount of trade ; so that, while the Government will be giving something to the people, the Commonwealth generally may be expected to gain. The uniformity of rate will not only be an advantage to men engaged in business, but will tend to induce the cheapening of living in the community generally. I hope that the committee will not turn its back on a great reform which, in the first instance initiated in the Postal department, may well be adopted with regard to the despatch of telegrams also. I hope we shall no longer have the position that it costs Is. to send a telegram between New South Wales and Victoria, and 4s. between Western Australia and New South Wales.

Senator DAWSON

- The cable intervenes in the case of Tasmania.

Senator Major GOULD

- I know that the cable will increase the cost, but, as matters stand, any loss that may be sustained by Tasmania in consequence of having to pay for the cost of cheapening this communication will be made up by that State. I hope that the amount of business will so increase that there will be no loss to the Commonwealth at the end of five years. While there will be these rates of 1/2 d. Jd., and Id. per word for "town and suburban " messages, messages to " other places within each State," and " InterState " messages, it is well to remember that at the present time the rate is 6d. for ten words within town and suburbs, and that the address and signature are not charged for. The twelve words for 6d. will include the name and address, and the signature. So that, practically, we are increasing the rates. In cases of messages between adjoining States, it is well for the committee to realize the fact that where the person sending the message utilizes his full power, he will pay a higher rate in some instances than he will now.

Senator Drake

- He will not pay more when the message is a long one, because the price per extra word is lower than we formerly charged.

Senator Major GOULD

- As far as concerns telegrams within a city, I suppose the cost will work out at about what it is now.

Senator DRAKE

- In countries where this system which we propose has been adopted, persons sending telegrams get into the habit of shortening the address. That has been the case in London. One of the strong arguments in favour of this system is that it does away with the waste of the time of operators, and of the use of the wires, which is caused through people using an entirely unnecessary number of words in the addresses and signatures. They, would not use so many if they had to pay for them.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- On the other hand, the experience at home was that the shortening of addresses caused the department great trouble.

Senator DRAKE

- I do not think that will result. There may be some .difficulty at first, but when the messengers come to know the addresses they will be able to deliver messages just as well as though a great number of words . were used in describing them. It is in consequence of this change in the method that the difficulty in estimating the financial result of the alterations in the Bill has arisen. The question of whether the thousands who send telegrams at the minimum charge will be able to convey their messages in the smaller number of words allowed them under this proposal is very much a matter of conjecture. My officers report that to a very great extent the messages transmitted at present within the minimum of nine or ten words will, in nearly all cases, be sent for 6d., that is to say, it will be possible to still further

condense them. In obtaining these reports I have requested the officers of the department to take everything of that kind into consideration, and the figures they give me are based upon conjecture as to the probable result of the alteration. There are so many factors to be considered that it is almost impossible to foretell with anything like accuracy what the result will be. Under this proposal, however, we obtain something like uniformity. In each State we shall have sixpenny telegrams for town and suburbs.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- But the department will not give as much as it has done.

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Senator DRAKE

- We are giving twelve words, and even taking Senator Sargood's estimate of six words for the signature and address, there will be a margin of six words for the message. A large proportion of these short telegrams simply convey one idea which might be conveyed in fewer words, and under the pressure of the new method it is probable that they will be capable of still further condensation. Our calculation is that for messages of that kind, the minimum of twelve words will be sufficient. Therefore, while the department will be eased to a certain extent, the public will be served. We propose a 9d. message for all States, a system similar to that which Victoria has enjoyed, so that this will be a decided advantage to the other States. For telegrams that are slightly in excess of the limit, there will be this advantage, that instead of a charge of 1d. being made for each additional word, which has hitherto been the practice in every State, we shall charge only 3/4 d. a word. That will be favourable to the sender of the message, and logically more correct, because it seems to me to be absurd to charge a low price for nine words, and a higher price for any words beyond that limit. In doing so, we really place senders of longer telegrams at a disadvantage. With regard to the Inter-State telegrams,, I pointed out when I moved the second reading that I anticipated that the difference between a separate rate for messages from one State to another as at present, and one rate throughout the Commonwealth in respect of a message from any one State to another State, would be £10,000. From a federal point of view, I think that to bring the people into touch with one another it is worth that cost. I know it is a great concession, and I hesitated considerably before proposing it, but I believe it will be a good thing.

Senator O'Keefe

- T - The concession is £10,000 1

Senator DRAKE

- Yes, that will be the cost of allowing the same rate between States that are not contiguous as between States that are contiguous.

Senator Macfarlane

- Except in the case of Tasmania.

Senator DRAKE

- The difficulty in regard to Tasmania is that that State is not contiguous to Victoria, and the cable between the two is in the hands of a private company. The company charge 1s. for the minimum message. Therefore the minimum charge for a message from Victoria to Tasmania is 2s., 1s. of which is paid to the private company which owns the cable. I am told that the guarantees referred to by Senator Keating are not alive.

Senator Keating

- The pooling is not alive.

Senator DRAKE

- If we adopted the shilling rate between Victoria and Tasmania, some one would have to pay the shilling to the company. It seems to me that if the department paid that shilling, it would have to debit it to the Postal department in Tasmania, and the Treasurer of that State would have to meet the increased charge. I do not suppose there would be any objection to Tasmania paying that amount if the Government of that State chose to do so, but I am not in a position to say that the Government of Tasmania are prepared to do so. I am sorry that this difficulty exists. I am continually considering what would be the views of the State Governments in these matters, and that is only fair during the bookkeeping period, because we do not want to play fast and loose with what is not our own. I think it is better that this matter should be left as it is, and that the department should endeavour to obtain a

reduction of the charges as soon as possible. I do not think I should be justified at the present time in accepting the amendment.

Senator FRASER

- I agree- . with a great deal of what Senator Playford has said. I do not think that we should disturb the finances of the States for the first few years at all events, and as in this: case that grasping company, the Eastern

Extension Company--

Senator McGregor

- It is a good private enterprise.

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Senator FRASER

- It is a very successful enterprise, and, no doubt, it deserves success. If it had to compete with another line here as it has in other parts of the world, it would be very liberal, but it is not very liberal in this case. Where it has a monopoly, it clings to it like a horse leech. If we interfere with the rates in the smaller States, and reduce their revenue, then really we shall be morally responsible for making good the difference to them. We have no right to do that, at all events, for the first few years. The Tariff is based upon that idea, and I think we should have regard to it when fixing the telegraphic rates. I agree with what the Postmaster-General has said in regard to certain Inter-State telegrams. In many cases it pays the sender of telegraphic messages to New South Wales and Queensland, for example, to divide one long telegram into several short messages. They save 40 or 50 per cent, by doing so. For instance, in the case of a message of 100 words to New South Wales, a certain charge is made for the first ten words, and after that the charge is doubled. Telegrams can be divided into two or three messages with advantage in many cases. No doubt the proposal in the Bill in this direction is a great improvement. As the number of words are increased, the rate should be decreased. As' to the further proposal, however, I think that- we should consult the Premier of Tasmania, who, after all, is responsible, before we proceed to reduce the revenue of that State perhaps by some thousands of pounds. We have no right to reduce the revenue of any State in a matter like this without consulting the Premier of that State. Therefore, I would urge that the suggested amendment should not be agreed to. Indeed, I would go further and support Senator Playford's proposal that the schedule should not be dealt with at present.

Senator STANFORTH SMITH

- No one is more impressed than I am with the advisability of endeavouring to break down the provincial boundaries between the various States of the Commonwealth. Nothing tends to accentuate the presence of these boundaries more than the fact that letters and telegrams may be sent to any address within a State at certain rates, but that when they are sent beyond the State boundaries the charge is doubled or even quadrupled in some cases. A telegram may be sent to any address within a State for 1s., but when transmitted to an address in another State the charge is 3s. or 4s. A telegram of ten words from Western Australia to Queensland costs 4s., and the charge is the same between Western Australia and Tasmania. We should endeavour to break down that system as soon as possible. I agree, however, with Senator Playford, that during the first five years of the existence of the Commonwealth we should be exceedingly careful in dealing with the finances. During the bookkeeping period we must remember that in passing legislation such as this we are acting on behalf of the States, and that any extra expense entailed will simply be debited to the States involved. Until the various States are able to see how they will be situated financially, we ought not to make any very drastic changes with regard to postal and telegraphic rates. But as the Postmaster-General has pointed out, we have an opportunity now of making a considerable revenue by newspaper postage, and we are in a position consequently to bring about greater uniformity in telegraphic rates. I am sure we shall find that if these rates are brought into operation the amount of telegraphic business done will be very greatly increased. The existing Inter-State rates for telegrams sent from Western Australia are very severe, and have greatly retarded the development of telegraphic business. It must be remembered that there are 50,000 people on the gold-fields of Western Australia, whose friends and relations are in the eastern States. Those people send an enormous amount of money to the eastern States, chiefly in the form ' of postal money-orders, on account of the excessive telegraphic charges. If the telegraphic rates were reduced there is no doubt that the number of telegraphic!money orders would be very much increased. I think the volume of telegraphic business under the rates

proposed would be increased at least threefold. We may be confirmed in that view by what has happened in connexion with the cable rates. When the cable rate was something like 10s. per word, the volume of business done with the United Kingdom and Europe was very small, and as the cost was gradually reduced, the volume of business gradually increased, practically in the same ratio as the reductions in the rates. The same experience has followed the adoption of penny postage in New Zealand. We must further recollect that, under this proposal, the address and signature are to be counted in the same way as in a cable message, and they would average at least seven words - five for the address and two for the signature. That, in the case of an ordinary telegram, means an increase of 50 per cent., so that really people will be paying 1½d. per word, instead of 1d., if this proposal is adopted. The actual loss is estimated by the Postmaster-General to be about £10,000 a year to secure a uniform rate. He estimates the loss upon telegrams at £45,000, and against that he sets a gain of £35,000 on newspaper postage. I believe that the actual loss of £10,000 would in a very few years' time be wiped out. With respect to Tasmania, I think that the representatives of that State should guide us in this matter. They are aware that during the first five years any extra charge is to be debited to their State. The agreement with the company will be in force for the next eight years. For the first five years Tasmania will have to bear the cost of cheap telegraph communication, and for the next three years the Commonwealth would have to bear it upon a prorata population basis.

Senator McGregor

- In five years it will, be obliterated by the increase in business.

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Senator STANFORTH SMITH

- I quite agree with the honorable senator. In dealing with telegraphic rates I desire to call the attention of the Postmaster-General to many anomalies existing. In Western Australia, for instance, a rate and a-half is charged upon messages sent after seven p.m., while in some of the other States telegrams are sent at the ordinary rate up to a very late hour. There is another extraordinary anomaly in connexion with press rates. The Federal Government has been legislating now for eight months, and yet it is cheaper to send a late press telegram from Sydney to Bendigo, Ballarat, or Geelong, than it is to send one after twelve o'clock from Melbourne to those places. Surely after eight months of legislating it is an extraordinary thing that if a press message is sent from Melbourne to Ballarat after twelve o'clock, a considerably higher rate has to be paid than for a message of similar length sent from Sydney to Ballarat. No doubt the Postmaster-General has been organizing his department, but it is time now that these anomalies were removed, and that we should have uniformity in practice and hours of working, as well as in rates.

Senator O'KEEFE

- - Honorable senators need not be afraid of Tasmania's position. Senator Smith and others have said that they think the committee should be guided by the opinions of honorable senators from Tasmania. I think we are all in favour of the proposal submitted by Senator Macfarlane, and we can speak for at least a majority of the people of Tasmania when we say that they would be in favour of the proposed reduction of rates. Some honorable senators may not know that a large volume of business between Tasmania and Victoria is connected with the mining industry. I think that the telegrams sent in connexion with that industry form a very large proportion of the business done. I am in a position to know that if the charges were reduced the volume of business would probably be doubled in a very short time, because people who now send very short telegrams on account of the cost would double the length of their telegrams if the rate was lowered.

Senator Fraser

- Then the company would get the lot 1

Senator O'KEEFE

- N - No, the company would not get the lot. If Senator Fraser had been listening he would have found the figures given by Senator Keating very instructive, and they would have shown him that Tasmania had a very small loss to make up. We quite understand the position that during the five years' bookkeeping period Tasmania would be debited with the loss on the service, but I feel so satisfied that the majority of the people would be in favour of the change that I am going to support Senator Macfarlane's proposal.

Senator WALKER

- I have listened with some interest to what has been said by the Tasmanian representatives. The Senate



is undoubtedly the States' House, and when all the representatives of any one State desire a change, and are willing that their State should make up any loss involved, they have made out a strong case to justify them in having their own way.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- The honorable senator did not think that upon the kanaka question.

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Senator WALKER

- I am very glad that Senator Symon supported me in that matter. According to this schedule there are rough geographical zones created. The town and suburban is one zone, the State is another, and the Inter-State is a third zone. There is a great deal to be said in favour of the various rates proposed, because within the same State there may be no repeating stations required, while in the case of telegrams sent from one State to another a repeating station is necessary, and several are sometimes required. I agree with what has been said as to the increase of business following upon a reduction of rates, and the Postmaster-General is aware that the reduction of the rate to 1s. for telegrams in Queensland greatly facilitated and economized the government of the State by enabling communications to be had more quickly with outside- places than in days gone by, and enabling law and order to be preserved more cheaply. I should like some of the senators from Tasmania to tell us exactly what this company charges per word. One honorable senator has told us that the charge is 8d. per word, and another has said it is 1s. per word, and we have heard the probable loss stated as £1,400 a year, assuming the receipts be kept up to what they were last year. We should get some definite information as to this charge per word between the mainland and Tasmania. One honorable senator representing Tasmania has not yet spoken, but silence gives consent, and we may assume that he supports Senator Macfarlane.

Senator KEATING

- I am pleased to note that the Postmaster-General, by his latest utterances, recognises that the £10,000 which would be involved as a sacrifice in the establishment of uniform rates is well worth incurring for the purpose of federal uniformity. At the same time, I regret to note that, in connexion with one particular State, the honorable and learned senator is not quite prepared to apply his federal principles as logically as I think he might.

Senator Drake

- That is only because of a special reason, the private company intervening.

Senator KEATING

- I will deal with the special reason in a moment. I regret to note that Senator Playford, whose common sense and large experience in these matters always suggests to my mind that he takes a proper view of them, has on this occasion failed to realize the possibilities of the present situation. The honorable senator has complained that we are not cutting up the whole of the Commonwealth into zones. I do not wish to follow him too much in detail, but I point out, that in the past each of the States has regulated its telegraphic and postal rates on the principle that each State is one postal and telegraphic area. Now that we have entered into a union, and are administering the postal and telegraphic systems of the States under a uniform system of administration, the whole of the Commonwealth is one postal and telegraphic area, and we should apply to it the principle of uniformity.

Senator Playford

- Not during the book-keeping period.

Senator KEATING

- During the bookkeeping period, as well as during any other period. If Senator Playford is of opinion that because the bookkeeping clauses are to be found in the Constitution, it is desirable that in all our legislation we should let things remain separate as they have been heretofore, and not become federalized, he and I are at opposite extremes in the view we take of the matter.

Senator Drake

- And we shall be in as bad a condition at the end of the bookkeeping period.

Senator KEATING

- Tha That is so. We shall be as we were, and making no progress whatever.

Senator Playford

- Honorable senators take £10,000 away from South Australia, and they call that making progress. 24 q  
Senator KEATING

- Senator Playford has yet to demonstrate "to the satisfaction of the committee that we are taking away from any State the amount he refers to, when he speaks in terms like that. When in the old country the system of carrying mails and charging for their carriage according to distance \_was" proposed to be set aside for the establishment of a system of Id. postage, the same arguments were put forward as Senator Playford is putting forward now, namely, that the returns under the then existing conditions, were so much, and if Id. postage was once established there would be the same volume of business, and the loss would be so much. Senator Playford fails to realize, as the gentlemen who used those arguments failed to realize, that a reduction of rates does not mean that the volume of business done will necessarily remain at what it was under pre-existing conditions. With the reduction of the rates the volume of business must necessarily increase.

Senator Playford

- Victoria tried penny postage, but found that the business did not increase, and reverted to 2d. postage.  
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Senator KEATING

- In 1889 or 1890 a penny postal rate was adopted for Victoria. The volume of business increased to a very large extent, but it did not increase immediately to such an extent as to warrant the State in continuing it during the years of depression which followed 1891, and that was the reason why it reverted to the old system. Senator Walker is anxious to know the amount which the cable company receives for each word it passes over its cable. Under the original agreement certain terms were settled between the colony and Tasmania. In 1889 the agreement was varied. The original term of twenty years was extended by twenty years; the fixed annual subsidy of £4,200 was continued, and the Government was empowered to reduce the rates to whatever it pleased on condition that the company had as its proportion a message receipts revenue of at least £5,600 per annum. If the Commonwealth Parliament chooses to adopt a rate of 1s. per message between the States on the mainland and Tasmania, all it has to look to is that the company shall get as its proportion of the revenue £5,600 a year. If it should get in message receipts more than that sum per year, Tasmania is not responsible for one penny, but still has to pay the fixed subsidy of 4,200. Throughout its dealing with Tasmania, it has followed the policy of "heads I win, and tails you lose." The suggestion that the company is entitled to receive so much per word is not in point at all. The volume of business over its cable, as evidenced by the returns I have quoted, during the last five years has shown a very creditable increase; and, under present conditions, receiving 1s. for every ten words, or 1d. per word, it gets a revenue of nearly £10,000 a year, with the conditional guarantee of £5,600. We are in a position to establish a uniform system, and if it should cost Tasmania £1,200 or £1,500 a year for the first year or two - assuming that the volume of business did increase, and that the rates were reduced - I think the people of that State are quite prepared to pay that amount for one year or two. I feel confident that, with a reduction of rates, the increase in the volume of business will be so large during the first two or three years that there will be no necessity to take any thought as to providing for a deficiency. I intend to support the amendment. . -

Senator DOBSON

- I am in favour of this amendment. I certainly agree that it is best to legislate in the direction of uniformity, and, certainly, of uniformity of rates. I am inclined to agree with those who think that £10,000 a year to start with is not too dear a price to pay to enable us to make the Commonwealth one telegraphic area, and to send a message for 1s. from one end of it to the other, without regard to distance. If we are to legislate in the direction of uniformity, I certainly should not like to see the ocean State left out in the cold. If the Commonwealth can afford to send a message from Perth to the Gulf of Carpentaria for 1s. we ought to be able to cable from Tasmania to any State for 1s. The effect of striking out the words that the cable rate shall be added to the charge will be to make the Federal Government who took over all our contracts and obligations liable for this money, but -for the first five years I suppose the Postmaster-General will debit to Tasmania whatever deficit there may be in the message receipts. The whole matter will have to be considered when we come to discuss the financial problem. Several States will be very short in their revenue from the Tariff, and the position of Tasmania will have to be considered most seriously. This amendment will still further increase our liability. It appears to me to shift the onus of

paying the extra shilling from the commercial, professional, and wealthy men to the general taxpayers of Tasmania. I should certainly hesitate to do anything which would transfer a burden of £3,000 or £4,000 a year to the shoulders of the general taxpayers if I thought that that would be the result. But I agree almost absolutely with what Senator Keating has said and he has given figures which support his statement that within three years the loss will absolutely cease. I recollect the figures quoted in reference to the operation of Id. postage in New Zealand. I think that the department estimated that at the outset it would cause a loss of £80,000, but that in the third or fourth year the loss would probably be overtaken. In the first year the estimated loss was exceeded ; in the second year the estimated loss was decreased a great deal more than was anticipated ; and in the third year, not only had the loss been wiped out, but there was an absolute gain in comparison with the former receipts from 2d. postage. What has been experienced in New Zealand has been experienced throughout the world, I understand. Senator Keating has brought before us a very admirable argument, to show that we ought not to be frightened by the bogey that there is a considerable annual loss to be made up, and that we are putting the loss on to the wrong shoulders. I believe most firmly that in the third year there will be no loss, and, from the figures given to us, that there will be very little loss during the first and second years. And, considering what an advantage it will be to the people of Tasmania and of other States to be able to send a wire across the straits for 1s., I believe that the increase in the number of messages will be exceedingly large.

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Senator McGREGOR

- I should have been prepared to allow the Bill to go through almost as it was introduced had it not been for this amendment. I have a very great amount of sympathy with the " representatives of Tasmania, because I believe that they are looking at the question from the common-sense point of view, and that they are prepared to make a sacrifice in the first place, so that ultimately they may gain a great benefit. It has been said that of course a concession of this description is only given to benefit business people. If business people are charged 2s. or 5s. for a telegram, they transfer that liability to those with whom they do business, and the consumers ultimately have to pay. If the guarantee of £5,600 to the company has to be paid, it has to be distributed all over Tasmania; and if the business people of a State get cheaper cable rates, the general public will gain a benefit. I have not the least doubt that, long before the expiry of the five years' bookkeeping period, any loss will be made up by the increase of business, and that the Commonwealth will be really safe. I am inclined to do all I can to assist the representatives of Tasmania to get this small concession. What did that State or any other join the Commonwealth for? Every advocate of federation pictured the grand conditions that would arise when everything was made uniform and there ceased to be any confusion. This uniformity, so far as Tasmania is concerned, will cost the Commonwealth nothing, and if the people of that State are prepared to make the sacrifice, why should we complain? I hope that the amendment will be made, and that the Bill will be passed as soon as possible.

Question - That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the schedule - put.

The committee divided -

Ayes ... .. 7

Noes ... .. 15

Majority..... 8

Question so resolved in the negative.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments (by Senator Drake) agreed to-

That the following words be added to the schedule - " The foregoing rates are exclusive of portage charges." "A fraction of a penny occurring in a charge calculated according to the foregoing rates is to be charged as a penny."

Senator Major GOULD

- The question of press telegram rates, which is dealt with by part 2 of this schedule, merits some consideration. In some instances the rates now proposed are higher than those charged at the present time. Every additional 50 words of a press message within any State is charged for under this schedule at the rate of 9d., whereas the present charge is 6d. I submit that that would be a fair rate to charge in the future. So far as time and labour are concerned there would be a gain to the Government in charging 6d.

for every additional 50 words, because I understand that an expert telegraph operator can put through 50 words within a couple of minutes. I think the rate for a good operator is 30 words per minute. We want to encourage the use of telegrams by the newspapers as much as possible, and to increase the cost is to take a backward step. Hitherto the attitude of the Postmaster-General in regard to these telegraph rates has been to make reductions, and it would be a pity if he were to turn his back on that policy in regard to press messages. I therefore suggest that the line "every additional 50 words, or portion of 50 words, 9d.," should be altered so as to make the charge 6d.

Senator DRAKE

- The rate referred to is for press messages within a State. The rate is 1s. 6d. for 100 words, and in most of the States 6d. for every additional 50 words. In only one State is the rate for every additional 50 words 9d. I am very anxious to adopt the principle of taking the lowest rate which we can possibly charge, and in the matter of press telegrams it is right to be as liberal as we can, following out the policy adopted hitherto. I therefore move -

That the word "ninepence," after the words "Every additional 50 words, or portion of 50 words," be omitted, with the view to insert in lieu thereof the word "sixpence."

It is to be understood that I cannot consent to any reduction on the charges for Inter-State telegrams, because the rate now is the lowest charged in any State. We propose to take the lowest rate prevailing in any of the States, and make it apply to messages between one State and another, however distant they may be.

Amendment agreed to.

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Senator Major GOULD

- I should like to direct the attention of the Postmaster-General to the next division relating to press telegrams within the Commonwealth. At present the rate charged for messages relating to Commonwealth news is 1s. for any portion of 100 words, or one-third of the rate charged for ordinary press telegrams within the Commonwealth.

Senator DRAKE

- No. When it was proposed to carry telegrams relating to Commonwealth news at what is called the single rate, the rate we adopted was the lowest in Victoria and New South Wales, namely, from 8.30 a.m. to 7.30 p.m., not exceeding ten words, sixpence; for every additional word up to 34 words, 1/2 d. per word, and between 34 and 100 words, 1s. 6d. When a message goes beyond 34 words, payment has to be made as for 100 words, and then for every additional 50 words, or portion thereof, sixpence. That is the rate I put in the Bill first of all. It appeared to me, however, that if we adopted that rate we should be charging 1s. 1d. for a message of 44 words, which according to our ordinary Inter-State rate for press telegrams could go for 1s. 6d. What I have done is this: I have taken the rate which we have been charging for Commonwealth telegrams, and I have reduced it again, so as to make the charge for the shorter telegrams the same as the charge for the ordinary press telegrams. The charge for a short message, up to 50 words will be the same as that for the ordinary press telegram. The difference is that for an ordinary Inter-State press telegram of 100 words a charge of 3s. is made, whereas for an Inter-State message conveying Commonwealth news it is only 1s. 6d. per 100. If I had not made the alteration we should have been charging on a higher scale for short press telegrams relating to Commonwealth news than for the ordinary press messages. There has been no addition whatever, but a reduction in regard to short messages.

Senator Major GOULD

- This matter was brought under the notice of the Government some time ago, and a special concession was made. I thought it was practically a reduction to one-third of the ordinary press charges. Now I understand it was only equivalent to half.

Senator DRAKE

- We deliver such a message either in New South Wales or Queensland at the single rate. A message going to Queensland would be charged one-third of the ordinary rate, because instead of being charged the Victorian, New South Wales and Queensland rate, it is conveyed over the three States at the single rate fixed in New South Wales and Victoria. I have made the rate lower seeing that we are proposing to take all press telegrams up to 100 words at a lower rate than that fixed by New South Wales and Victoria.

Senator Major GOULD

- I should like the Postmaster-General to see whether it is not possible to further reduce the charge for telegrams relating to Commonwealth news. My reason for urging a further reduction is that it is advisable that the whole of the people of the Commonwealth should be cognisant, as far as possible, of what goes on in connexion with Federal Parliamentary matters.

Senator Drake

- That was the reason for the reduction.

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Senator Major GOULD

- Exactly. But I ask that there should be a still further reduction, so that the rate may be 1s. for 100 words, and 6d. for each additional 50 words or portion of 50 words. Instead of providing that a charge of 1s. shall be made for a message not exceeding 25 words, I would sooner see a charge of 1s. made for sending press messages, not exceeding 100 words, relating to federal parliamentary news to any address within the Commonwealth. That would mean that if only 25 words were sent the charge of 1s. would still remain. One hundred words is surely little enough for a press telegram, especially in view of the fact that we are dealing with such important matters. This is not a matter that appertains to any one State ; it applies equally to every State in the Commonwealth. The other day we discussed the Pacific Island Labourers Bill, and no doubt the people of Queensland felt a more lively interest in it than did those of Victoria or New South Wales, because it directly affected them. It is also necessary that the interpretation of what is matter relating to parliamentary and executive proceedings of the Commonwealth should be widened. The Prime Minister and Mr. Reid, who both hold recognised positions as leaders of parties, recently addressed meetings in the Melbourne Town Hall. I am informed that the press telegrams reporting the Prime

Minister's speech were transmitted at the minimum charge for federal parliamentary matter, while the telegraphic reports of Mr. Reid's speech were sent through at ordinary press rates. That is not fair. The public utterances of any member of the Federal Parliament should be known to his constituents. When any member of this Parliament deals with matters of parliamentary importance, the press should have an opportunity of sending telegraphic reports of his utterances at the rates charged for messages relating to the public utterances of the Prime Minister. We have practically three parties who have recognised leaders - the Government, the Opposition, and the Labour Party. Whatever these leaders say on public questions is a matter of importance to the people of the Commonwealth, for the shape and form which legislation takes is dependent very largely upon their utterances. In a smaller degree, members of this Parliament who are not leaders should also be given this opportunity to have their views placed before the people. The press circular points out that if a deputation waited upon a Minister with regard to the particular requirements of a State, a telegraphic report of the Minister's reply would be conveyed to that State at the lower rate, but no comment upon them would be allowed. If comment were added, the message would be charged at the higher rate. Again, if the same deputation were dissatisfied with the reply given by the Minister, and saw fit to seek the intervention of the leader of the Opposition or the leader of the labour party, the telegram relating to that deputation would be charged at the higher rate. We ought to treat all alike. As it is, the Government have to employ one or two men who are practically censors. They read through these messages and determine whether they can be sent at a lower rate or not.

Senator Drake

- Is the honorable and learned senator speaking from knowledge ?

Senator Major GOULD

- I am speaking from information conveyed to me. If the Minister says to a man in the office - " Go through this message and let us know whether it applies to a Minister or to an outside man," that officer, becomes practically a censor. I think it is a matter which is well worthy of consideration at the hands of the Postmaster-General. What is good for the Ministry or Opposition to-day will be good for the Ministry or the Opposition in time to come.

Senator DRAKE

- I think that Senator Gould has given the very best of reasons why there should not be any further reduction. At the commencement of the session it was represented that it was very desirable that the

proceedings of this Parliament should be made known throughout the Commonwealth, and that, with that object in view, information with regard to the proceedings of Parliament should be telegraphed to the more distant States at the rates prevailing for messages within this State. There appeared to be a great deal in that contention, and my colleagues allowed me to assent to the proposal that reduced rates should be charged. The result was that the contributors to the Inter-State press who were here desired at once to send other telegraphic matters which were not within the definition. Various representations were made to me by deputations, and at last I said . that, if the representatives of the press here would not make any further demand, we would largely extend the definitions so as to take in a lot of other matter. I have not the exact definition with me, but I know that it covered reports and summaries of Federal parliamentary proceedings and particulars relating thereto; reports of deputations to Federal Ministers ; parliamentary papers and Rills, or summaries thereof ; and also information given by Ministers for publication. That apparently satisfied the demands of the press at that time ; but, since the concession with respect to those matters was obtained, they have demanded that the definition should be still further extended. I know that this paper which has been sent round, and which refers to the Opposition and to the labour party, has an attractive appearance at first sight, but if we are to extend the definition to take in all the matters therein referred to, where on earth will it stop 1 The request made at first was simply that the proceedings of the Federal Parliament should be telegraphed at the lower rate, but the demand made at the present time is that any Member of Parliament apparently may send anything he likes at this very low rate.

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Senator Major Gould

- It does not refer to Members of Parliament unless they should be acting as press correspondents.

Senator DRAKE

- In the paper which has been referred to showing what the metropolitan press of the Commonwealth desire, they include : -

- Tactics of the Opposition.

- Ministerial manifestoes made in one State to pass to another.

- Opposition manifestoes made in one State to pass to another.

- Federal candidates' addresses, and all other matters of a like nature.

Having given way at the start, and allowed simply a report of the proceedings of the Commonwealth Parliament to pass at a single rate, applications are now being continually made to extend the definition of the matter to be sent at the reduced rate. Of course, we know that it is the reduced rate that is bringing about these continual demands for an enlarged definition, and, unless we have some clear understanding, the result will be directly that we shall have the whole of the press telegrams going through to distant States at the single rate.

Senator Major Gould

- Only if they deal with this class of business.

Senator DRAKE

- The demand made by the newspapers is so wide that it really covers nearly everything. I think that the definition we have at the present time is a very reasonable concession to the general desire that outside States shall have full information of what is going on in the Federal Parliament. It would have been safer and better if we had adhered to the first understanding, that it was simply to cover reports of the proceedings in the Federal Parliament - that is to say, that the gentlemen of the press who are in our galleries should report what was done in Parliament, and send those reports away at the reduced rates.

Senator Major Gould

- There are many tilings done outside Parliament about which the public wish to know.

Senator DRAKE

- The demand now made apparently is, that representatives of the press may go round and button hole Ministers or other Members of Parliament, get information from them, and send it at this low rate. The rates we have in Australia for ordinary press telegrams between one State and another are very low indeed, and I do not think there is any justification for a further reduction of the rates proposed. The rates proposed here are phenomenally low, especially when it is considered that these messages are sent over half a continent. The rates are - not exceeding 25 words1s., exceeding 25 words, and not exceeding 100

words 1s. 6d., which is half the very low rate we are charging at the present time for ordinary press telegrams and for every additional 50 words, or portion of 50 words 6d., which is only one-third of what we are charging for ordinary press telegrams; These rates are so very low that I think honorable senators should not press for any further concession.

Senator Major GOULD

- I should like to say with regard to the remarks made by Senator Drake, that I did not propose to make any amendment upon the rates proposed here. I am prepared to accept the position as it is today with regard to the charges; but, with regard to the information, I should like to point out that only information given by Commonwealth Ministers for publication is sent at the lower rate. That means, that supposing there is a caucus of Ministerial supporters, and some particular conclusion is arrived at, Ministers give the information to the press and it is sent at the reduced rate. But if a caucus of the Opposition or of the labour party is held, and the conclusions come to are given to the press, the public are to be debarred from getting them, so far as the Government are in a position to debar them, by refusing to send that information at the lower rate.

Senator Drake

- I think the best way to cure that would be to restrict the definition rather than to extend it.

Senator Major GOULD

- I do not agree with the honorable and learned senator. I think that the fullest possible information should be given to the press in connexion with our parliamentary duties. Of course, if a Minister takes a trip to Queenscliff for the benefit of his health, it would be absurd to telegraph that at the cheaper rate ; but where the matter is one in which the public are interested it is different.

Senator Drake

- A matter such as the honorable and learned senator refers to would be dealt with in a short message, and would be at the same rate as ordinary press messages.

Senator Major GOULD

- I do not propose to submit any amendment after the statement which the Postmaster-General has made.

Schedule, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

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22:39:00

Senate adjourned at 10.39 p.m.