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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

Government of Madrás

Public Works DEPARTMENT

G.O. No.	1023	Press
B.P. No.		Mis.
Dated	14-4-	195

Not to be folded or roughly handled

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*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Works Department,
14th April 1875.*

No. 340. Read the following letter from Captain G. T. SKIPWITH, R.E., Assistant Secretary to the Government of India, Public Works Department, (Civil Works—Telegraph,) to Colonel G. W. WALKER, R.E., Secretary to the Government of Madras, Public Works Department, dated Fort William, 19th March 1875, No. 162 T.:—

In forwarding the accompanying copy of a letter, No. 477, dated the 25th February 1875 (and of its enclosure), from the Director-General of Telegraphs in India, complaining of the inconvenience and interruption to traffic occasioned by the despatch, by Government officials, of "confidential" messages, I am directed to forward copy of a Circular No. 224—9 T., dated the 21st June 1872, issued from this Department relative to the use of the heading "Confidential" in Service Telegrams, and to request that the Government of Madras will be good enough to take steps to ensure its being acted on.

From the Director-General of Telegraphs in India, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Public Works Department, dated Calcutta, 25th February 1875, No. 477.

In my letters, No. 101 of the 13th June 1872, and No. 298 of the 15th October 1873, I brought to notice the serious inconvenience and delays that are caused by the despatch of so-called "Confidential" messages. The steps thereupon adopted by the Government of India to lessen the inconvenience have, I regret to say, been ineffectual, and of instances which have recently occurred I have the honor to submit to you one (return requested) which is a fair illustration of the evil of which I complain.

2. This message, which was clearly only intended to be confidential as regarded secrecy on the part of the addressee, must have delayed hundreds of other telegrams of equal, very probably of far greater, importance for a considerable period over the whole extent of line between Rangoon and Madras and between Calcutta and Madras and every station in India. The offices at Rangoon, Akyab, Dacca, Calcutta and Madras had all to be cleared of Signallers, and work on every other line connected with those offices put a stop to until this message was passed on. Annexed is an extract from the Traffic Code on the subject:—

"When a "confidential" State message *not in cipher* is presented for transmission, the cover must be taken at once *unopened* to the Telegraph Master *in charge* if he is on the premises; if not, to the Telegraph Master on duty, or senior Signaller if there is no 2nd Telegraph Master. The Telegraph Master or senior Signaller will then himself open the cover, bill for the message, and fill in the particulars in the *sent message register*. He will then call the Telegraph Master of the station to which the message is to be signalled, and also the Telegraph Masters of any intermediate stations that may be working in T and inform them that he has a "confidential" message. All Telegraph Masters will then clear their offices of Signallers, and the Telegraph Masters of the two terminal offices will themselves respectively send and receive the message, care being also taken so to adjust the transmitting keys and sounders that there may be no possibility of any one in an adjoining room or outside reading off the message by ear. Telegraph Masters of intermediate offices in T will remain in the signal rooms of their offices until the transmission of the confidential message is completed. If the message has again to be transmitted, the Telegraph Master of the station to which it was signalled will call the Telegraph Master of the next station, and so on, as above directed, until the message reaches its destination. The Telegraph Master of the station of delivery will himself place it in a cover marked "confidential" address and seal it. This cover he will then

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place in a large envelope which is to be addressed as usual without being marked confidential.

'Confidential' State messages so marked by the sender and not in cipher will be represented in the packets of ordinary drafts by a message form, on which will be entered the names of the Stations "from" and "to," the No., date, number of words, value (if "sent"), official instructions, and names of sender and addressee. The body of the message is to be omitted, the word "Confidential" being written across the form in place of it. This semi-blank draft will of course be made out and signed by the Telegraph Master himself. The actual drafts of non-cipher "confidential" State messages are to be enclosed in a separate cover, having the letters C. M. conspicuously marked upon it in large printing capitals not less than half an inch in length. This cover must be carefully gummed as well as sealed, and should be addressed to the check office in an ordinary official cover. The Telegraph Master will endorse on each "Confidential" message draft a certificate as follows:—"certified that the only persons in the office who have seen this message are——," &c. As a rule, however, no one should see it except the Telegraph Master in charge or on duty. Delivery Receipts will be attached to the actual drafts of confidential messages, not to the semi-blank copies."

3. The less frequently an officer employs the telegraph, the more inclined is he to exaggerate the importance of his telegram, the less he knows of the numerous precautions adopted in this department for the preservation of absolute secrecy, and the less credit does he give to this department for the deservedly high character it has earned in this respect.

4. The evil is of so grave a character and calls for such prompt remedy that I am satisfied that the special rules we have laid down for the treatment of messages marked confidential may with perfect safety be and ought to be cancelled. I would abolish the instruction "Confidential" altogether, but should the Government be of opinion that cases might arise of so grave a character as to call for special extra precautions in the despatch of a message the power of demanding "clear the office" ought, I think, to be restricted to those high officials, who are empowered to clear the line, or to such others only as are specially authorized in each case by one of them.

Circular Memorandum from the Secretary to the Government of India in the Public Works Department, (Civil Works—Telegraph,) to the Foreign, Home, Financial, Military, and Legislative Departments, and Department of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce, dated Simla, 21st June 1872, No. 224—9 T.

In forwarding copy of a letter* from the Director-General of Telegraphs, the undersigned is directed to suggest the propriety of steps being taken to ensure greater care in marking telegrams as "confidential," so that the practice may be rarely resorted to, and the inconvenience it occasions may be lessened.

* No. 101, dated 13th June 1872.

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14th April 1875.*

No. 341.

ORDER THEREON, 14th April 1875, No. 1,023.

CIVIL WORKS, No. 21.

COMMUNICATED to the several Departments of the Secretariat.

2. The use of the word "confidential" in the message itself will probably answer all the purposes in view without entailing any of the inconveniences to which its use as a heading appears to give rise.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) G. W. WALKER, Colonel R.E.,

Secretary to Government.

To the Public, &c., Departments.

- „ Revenue Department.
- „ Military „
- „ Consulting Architect.
- „ Consulting Engineer for Railways.
- „ Chief Engineer for Irrigation.
- „ Examiner of Railway Accounts.
- „ Controller of Public Works Accounts.

To all District Engineers.

„ the Special Executive Engineer, Wynaad.

Exd. S. T. Austin.

Spare Copies

Confidential

Copy of a Telegram, dated 10th Feb 1875.

From Rangoon -

From General Stewart -

To Madras -

To Colonel Langstaff.

Fort St. George.

Keep any new postings Deputy
Inspector for Chief information before
publishing.

Mr 2028/95

All communications
should be addressed to
the Secretary.

No. 224/9

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.
CIVIL WORKS.
Telegraph.

From
The Secy. to the Govt of India
in the P. W. Department.
To
The Foreign, Home, Financial,
Military and Legislative Depts
and Dept of Revenue, Agricul-
-ture and Commerce.

Sindia 21st June 1872.

X
12 1019/13 June
1872.

X In forwarding copy of a
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Mr. 2028/25

2020
Govt. of 1875 Madras.

PUBLIC WORKS.

To *The Public Works*

Dated

Sept.

Recd.

Encl.

G. O. *14 April* 1875, No. *1073*

Nos. *340-341*.

and transmitting copy of
Circular as to the use of the
heading "Confidential" in
service Telegrams and
requesting that steps be
taken to ensure its being
acted on, comm^d to the
several Depts of the
Sect^y, with remark.

Telegraph Messages - Con-
fidential - Letter from
the Govt of India forwarding
copy of correspondence from
the Director General of Telegr^{aphs}
in India relative to the
inconvenience and interrup-
tion to traffic occasioned by
the dispatch by Govt. Offices
of "Confidential Messages"