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*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Works Department,
6th November 1875.*

No. 169 From C A LAWSON, Esq, Editor of the *Madras Mail*, to Major-General G W WALKER, R E, Secretary to Government, Public Works Department, dated Madras, 23rd October 1875 —

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge receipt to-day of the Proceedings, Madras Government, Department of Public Works, 13th instant, containing a letter to you from Captain Skipwith, R E, the Assistant Secretary to the Government of India, relative to my suggestion for a revision of the existing rules for press telegrams

2 I observe with surprise that, in the opinion of the Governor-General in Council, the "Director-General would have been fully justified if he had withdrawn the privilege" of receiving press telegrams from this journal, simply because I demurred, pending the consideration of my representation on the subject, to pay what I considered, and the Director-General has admitted, was an unjust charge I conceive that the Government of India framed the existing rules for press telegrams not with a view to oblige Newspaper Proprietors or Editors, but *pro bono publico* The *Madras Mail*, with a circulation of 1,694 copies, is now one of the most considerable papers in the country, and it seems to me a harsh proceeding to desire to place such a journal at a disadvantage as compared with other journals in the matter of telegraphic news for no stronger reason than that I have, on public grounds, represented some flaws, in my opinion, in the existing rules for press telegrams

3 Moreover, the Government of India do not appear to have borne in mind the exact nature of those rules Captain Skipwith observes that by refusing to pay the difference between the "ordinary" and "press" rates on the telegram in question (which I made no use of), I failed to fulfil my part of the contract; but it has escaped his notice that the Telegraph Department had already failed to complete its part of the contract According to No 1 of the Rules, it is stated that to render a message eligible for acceptance as a press message, it "must be one of manifestly public interest," yet in the instance referred to the message contained an inquiry as to whether a statement that a certain newspaper was for sale was libellous This message was of no public interest on the face of it, yet the signaller received it as though it were so This, therefore, was an unintentional breach of contract on the part of the department for which I was not responsible Under Rule 4 the Director-General is vested with the power of "withdrawing the concession should he have reason to believe that the conditions are in any way infringed" In what way, I beg to ask, have I infringed the conditions? I have undertaken to publish messages "of manifestly public interest" transmitted to me for publication at press rates, or to pay the difference thereon between press and ordinary rates The department forwards a message that is manifestly not of public interest as a press telegram, and this message I do not publish Surely this is no infringement on my part of the conditions Yet the Governor-General in Council considers that the Director-General would have been fully justified if he had punished this journal for an offence of which it is innocent.

4 The concession referred to being a valuable one, fruitful of revenue to the Government, and of news to the Government and the public, I have no wish to forfeit it, and it appears to me that the thanks rather than the implied censure of the Government are due to me for pointing out where the rules regulating that concession are susceptible of easy amendment. It is stated in Rule 5 that "these rules are experimental only, and are liable to revision or cancellation at any time after ten days' notice,"

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but I was evidently in error in supposing that a representation by one who has submitted them largely to the test of experience would be welcome rather than obnoxious to the Director-General and the Government of India

5 Regarding the final paragraph of Captain Skipwith's letter, I need hardly say that the *Madras Mail* has no desire to avoid any pecuniary responsibility in connection with press telegrams. It was, of course, not the Rupees 3 that the Director-General claimed in error—a claim that he subsequently waived—which prompted the present discussion, but a feeling that it must be sometimes impossible for an Editor to act up to the engagement, "I undertake to publish in its entirety the text of every telegram received by me at the reduced rate" If, as I now understand, the department may accept and forward at press rates messages that are *not* manifestly of public interest, and yet hold the press responsible for its own error in conceding press rates to such messages, the first of the rules under reference should I submit be modified, as it does not warrant the idea that the department is free from responsibility.

6 I beg you will do me the honor of forwarding a copy of this letter to the Government of India.

No 170 ORDER THEREON, 6th November 1875, No 3,174

CIVIL WORKS, No 11.

FORWARDED to the Secretary to
Government of India with reference to
letter from the Assistant Secretary to

Government, Public Works Department, No 347 T, dated 3rd September 1875

(True Extract)

(Signed) G. W. WALKER, Major-General, R E.,
Secretary to Government.

No 171 DOCKET No 3,175, dated 6th November 1875

COPY of the above forwarded to the Government of India.

(True Extract)

Major-General, R E.,
Secretary to Government

Public Works Dept.

Letter from the Editor of the Madras
Mail dated 23rd October 1895

P. W. 1895. Dep't.
No. 6990

From
The Editor of the
"Madras Mail"

Dated 20 Oct. 1895
Recd. 30 "

Regarding revision
of certain regulations
in the rules for Rep.
telegrams.

With order

Circulated for order,
whether to forward, or
return to be sent direct
as his former letters were.

The no objection to
forwarding them - I am
not sure that the same
is not of the nature

Commander Major Genl R.E.

Secy. to Govt. P.W.D.

I wd. transmit this
as the S.D. have thought
fit to make up the channel
for replying to the Madras
Mail Editor.

OK

17-18 October 1895 376-377
19 October 207-208

At No 3194
forwarded to the Secretary to Government
of India with reference to letter from the Assistant
Secretary to Government dated 14th March 1895
No 319 of dated 3rd April 1895
(The Editor of the Mail & Telegraphs)
Dated 13th April 1895. W.M.D.
Copy of this order forwarded to the
Govt. of India dated 22-11-95
30-10-95

6990

Ex 6 November 75
~~W~~ W-3174

Forwarding a letter from
the Editor, Paula's Mail
regarding the position of
certain regulations in
the rules for Paula's Mail

WINE 169-170
Paula's "Paula's Mail"
intends the Editor, Paula's
Mail, regarding the re-
-vision of certain regulations
in the — which the
forwarded to the party
in question

6990
OFFICE OF THE
PUBLIC WORKS

6990
The Paula's Mail
in order to check
3174
3175