

Public Works (1897) Department.

G.O., No. 442 W

DATED 15 February 1897

[Despatch Abstract.]

International Telegraph Conference: Govt of India
letter forwarding extracts from a joint report of
7/10 August 1896 by Mr P. V. Duke C.I.E. Dy. Director General of
Telegraphs and Mr B. T. Finch Director-in-Chief of the
Indo-European Telegraph Dept who were the two dele-
gates deputed to represent the interests of the Govt of
India at the - held at Bada Pest. Govt of the
Chambers of Commerce, Madrid and Barcelona.

P. W. 28.
[5,000-80-11-96.]

15/2/97
Indexed. 16/2

P. W. 29.
[5,000-80-11-96.]

of the name of
Circular, together with certain
that came up at the

Subsequent.
 Forwarding certain extracts
 giving the results of the dis-
 cussions at the International
 Telegraph Conference held at
 Budapest in regard to the
 proposed reduction of the
 rate for messages between
 India and Europe, the reduc-
 tion in rates between India
 China & Japan and the obliga-
 use of the Berne Official Tele-
 grams, together with certain

To the Chairman Cl. of Commerce
New York
" — " — Corona

② 15/2

BACK PAPERS.

No.	Date.
50.859 W	21-3-96
3273 W	21-12-95
1182 W	16-5-95
207 W	28-1-95
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2877 W	10-11-94
2876 W	10-11-94
2873-4 W	10-11-94

FURTHER PAPERS.

No.	Date.
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Enclosure to P. W. Dept. No. 38 T. of 25th January 1897.

Extracts from a joint report, dated the 10th August 1896, by Mr. P. V. LUKE, C.I.E., Deputy Director General of Telegraphs, and Mr. B. T. FINCH, Director-in-Chief, Indo-European Telegraph Department.

7. In the matter of the most important mission with which we were entrusted, viz., the endeavour to obtain a reduction in the rate for messages between India and Europe, we regret to report that we were unsuccessful. It was not a matter which had anything to do with the Conference, it was a question to be settled entirely with the Companies belonging to the Joint Purse and the Governments concerned. Our instructions were to the effect that while taking no initiative and having no authority to assent to any proposals as to a guarantee from Indian Revenues in return for a reduction in the rate for telegrams between Europe and India, we were to take every opportunity of representing the views held by the Commercial communities in India and England on the subject, and to press upon the representatives of the Joint Purse the desirability for some diminution of the existing charge. With this object the Indian Delegates attended one meeting of the Joint Purse in London and two in Budapest. The views of the Government of India, as expressed in letter No. 111 T., dated Simla, 18th May 1896, from the Public Works Department to the Director General of Telegraphs, were duly communicated to the representatives of the Eastern and Indo-European Companies. Every argument we could think of, in addition to those already advanced by the British Post Office and the different Chambers of Commerce, was brought forward. It was pointed out as regards "Code" that, notwithstanding the immense improvement in the art of codifying during the last ten years, the number of words transmitted between India and Europe had remained practically stationary, which proved that the amount of matter telegraphed had increased; that though the limit of codifying may not have been reached, the limit of convenience in using code had certainly been approached, and that there was no likelihood of equal improvement in code during the next ten years, so that the number of words would surely increase more nearly with the increased amount of matter certain to be telegraphed. It was insisted that the trade of India is a constant one with a natural growth, not caused by excitement consequent on discoveries of gold, or wars, or financial crisis. That while there might be a "boom" in telegraph traffic there is no chance of the present steady and progressive traffic falling off. The increase in the number of telegrams between Bombay and Suakin consequent upon sending Indian troops to Egypt was instanced as showing how the traffic over the Eastern cables might be unexpectedly increased. It was also urged that the cost of manufacturing, laying and maintaining cables is cheaper than it was; while the character of cables has been improved by advancement in science, thus tending to prolong their lives; that the fall in exchange while increasing the amount paid by the message-sender in India for his telegrams diminishes, though perhaps only to a small extent, the expenses of the cable companies, in that some of their employes at Aden, Bombay and Madras, are paid in silver. The Indo-European Company were specially reminded of the very important concessions from the Government they enjoy, which, as pointed out by Mr. Lamb in his letter to Sir John Pender, dated the 18th of December 1895, were granted when the Company was in a very different position to what it is now.

8. Notwithstanding all we could say, and we were warmly supported by Mr. Lamb, the Delegate for Great Britain, the Company's representatives in the Joint Purse remained firmly opposed to a reduction of even sixpence a word. When we say the "Joint Purse" it must be understood to apply chiefly to the "Eastern Telegraph Company," as upon them would fall the greatest share of any loss, though no reduction could be made without the mutual consent of all the parties to the "Joint Purse." It may here be stated that, roughly speaking, a reduction of sixpence a word means, supposing that no increase in traffic resulted, a loss of about 50,000 £ a year, to be shared approximately as under:—

	£
Eastern Telegraph Company	26,000
Indo-European Telegraph Company	9,600
Indo-European Department	7,900
Indian Telegraph Department	6,500

9. The Eastern Telegraph Company gave us distinctly to understand that, while they were most anxious to meet the wishes of the Government, they regretted they could not, for financial reasons, agree to risk the loss entailed by even a sixpenny reduction without some guarantee against a diminution of revenue. They pointed out that, looking especially to the inadequacy of their reserve fund, their financial position was not such as to justify their facing a loss of some 26,000 £ a year, which the stationary character of the traffic, and the negative results of a similar reduction ten years ago, indicated as almost certain to ensue. They brought forward the fact that they were on the verge of possible competition due to the laying of a Pacific cable. They would not admit that the demand by the public for a reduction had

been demonstrated to be a real one. They contended that what the merchant wanted was a quick and reliable service, and this he now enjoyed; and they argued that the present rate was not only not high, but, looking to the fact that each code word represented between 20 and 30 ordinary words, was already lower than that of any unguaranteed telegraph system in the world. Finally, they pointed to the very substantial reductions about to be made by the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company between India and stations to the eastward. These reductions, they said, were to be made because the present rates were recognized to be high, and because the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company were in a position to afford the reduction. The Eastern Company further announced that very substantial reductions were to be made for telegrams between India and stations south of Aden up to Durban, and including Mauritius; so that, even though no reduction was made between India and Europe, India would still be largely benefited by reductions in other directions.

10. As an alternative to a reduction in the general rate, a proposal had been put forward by the Director-in-Chief, Indo-European Telegraph Department, that, as an experiment, the reduction should be confined to telegrams in plain language as distinguished from telegrams in code. While recognizing the difficulties attendant on this proposal, the Government of India authorised their Delegate to agree to it subject to the following conditions:—

- (1) That the decision whether a message is in plain language or code should rest entirely, at the time of booking, with the original telegraph office, which alone is in a position to consult the sender of the message, and that no after objections be raised.
- (2) That the system be worked with the greatest liberality as to what may pass as plain language.

The question of plain language as an alternative was discussed at the meeting of the Joint Purse held in London referred to in para. 7, and as the reduction would only affect about 3 per cent. of the traffic the Companies expressed their readiness to give the system a trial. The following resolution was passed at the meeting:—

"The question of a reduced tariff between Europe and India for plain language messages was discussed, and, after full consideration, the meeting was of opinion that a reduced tariff for plain messages might be introduced experimentally for three years, between Europe and India, under the observance of conditions formulated to prevent abuse of the privilege, and that the following addition might be made to Article 26 of the Convention:—

"For messages in plain language exchanged between Europe and India, this tariff will be reduced, experimentally for three years from the date the rules and regulations and tariffs of the next Conference come into force, to 2s. per word *via* Suez and Teheran and 1s. 10d. per word *via* Turkey. Such messages must be written in the language of the country of origin (which for India is declared to be English)."

"The telegraph administrations will only accept these plain language telegrams at a reduced rate as an experimental measure, and on the clear understanding that if senders of telegrams send as plain language telegrams which contain code, the privilege will be discontinued."

11. When it was found that there was absolutely no chance of a reduction of even sixpence in the general rate, the question of plain language telegrams was brought up at a Joint Purse meeting in Budapest. At this meeting the decision of the Companies was to the effect that the conditions of the case had been altered by the admission by the Conference of the fifteen letters and five figures for Extra-European telegrams, thus making it still more difficult to distinguish between plain language and "Code," and to prevent abuse of the privilege. That looking to the fact that the Government of India insisted on the system, if adopted, being worked in a liberal spirit which they considered would lead to pretty well everything being admitted as plain language, they regretted they could no longer adhere to their former decision to give plain language an experimental trial. We pointed out that the Indian Telegraph Department would do its best not to accept "Code" messages as plain language, and that all that was insisted on was that once a message was accepted by the office of origin as "plain language," the decision must be taken as final and no subsequent claim for recovery of short charges made. The Companies however decided, with much regret, that they could not afford to meet the wishes of the Government for a reduction of rates between India and Europe even to the extent of a reduction for plain language. Mr. Lamb, the Delegate for Great Britain, not being in favour of the "plain language" proposal, could not support it, though he agreed not to oppose it if brought forward. Under the circumstances, as there was no chance of its being carried, the proposal was not brought before the Conference.

12. With regard to the instructions received that we were to press for some reduction in rates between India and China and Japan, very substantial reductions had been arranged by the Eastern Extension Company before any application was made to them. We are informed by the Company's representatives that these reductions will be as follows, to come into force

as soon as possible after the Convention now being arranged between the Companies and China has been signed and ratified:—From India to Singapore, Malacca, Java, Cochin China, Labuan, Hongkong, Shanghai, Amoy, Foochow the rates* will be reduced to 3 francs a word. The rate from Singapore to Europe is to be reduced to 6 francs 27½ centimes as soon as the impending reduction between Europe and China is arranged. The rate from India to Japan will be reduced from 11 to 6 francs, and there will be large reductions in the local rates between intermediate stations.

*Present rates:—	Francs.
Singapore	3-92½
Penang	2-92½
Malacca	3-67½
Java	4-17½
Cochin China	3-07½
Labuan	4-72½
Hongkong	6-00
Shanghai, Amoy, Foochow	8-00
Japan	11-00
Singapore to Europe	7-20

13. In addition to these reductions we

†Present rates:—	Francs.
Zanzibar and Mombasa	8-42½
Bagamoyo and Dar-es-Salaam	8-62½
Mozambique	9-72½
Durban	9-67½
Seychelles	7-80
Mauritius	9-67½

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18. Coming now to the alterations and revisions of the Service Regulations, it may be said that most of them were in matters of detail and tended to greater simplicity and clearness, and to a better arrangement of existing rules.

It will be noticed that on this occasion the Indian Administration put forward no propositions. We give in the order of the paragraphs of the letter No. 5 T. from the Director General of Telegraphs to Secretary of Government of India, Public Works Department, dated 23rd April 1896, the instructions to her Delegates as regards the propositions made by other countries and the result of the decisions of the Conference.

Para. 4.—To join with France in her proposal to assimilate the method of counting letters in plain language and figures in the European and Extra-European systems. The Companies having rather unexpectedly signified their willingness to accept France's proposal, it was carried with little or no discussion, and fifteen letters in plain language and five figures will count as one word in Extra-European as in the European system.

Para. 5.—To oppose the obligatory use of the official vocabulary. A whole sitting of the Reglement Committee was taken up in discussing this question. It was finally indefinitely postponed, *i.e.*, the following proposition of France was unanimously adopted:—

"From a date to be fixed by a future Conference all words employed in private 'Code' telegrams will be taken from the official vocabulary drawn up by the Berne International Office duly enlarged."

The charges brought against the official vocabulary by its opponents were, in the main, ably refuted by the Director of the Berne Bureau in his "Communication Speciale" on the subject. He pointed out that the mistake was in treating as a "Code" what was only meant to be a vocabulary or register of words from which codemakers could choose their words to form a "Code" and that as regards a "Register of Terminations," the absence of which was a cause for complaint, the preparation of such a Register was the work of the codemaker and had nothing to do with the vocabulary. It also was pointed out that the composition of this vocabulary had already cost more than 120,000 francs, and there was a general feeling that this work ought not to be lost, and that when enlarged and improved the vocabulary (*qua* vocabulary and not as a code) would be welcomed as a convenient substitute for the dictionaries of the eight languages from which codemakers would select words to form codes.

Para. 8 gives the following proposals as worthy of support:—

- (1) Italy's proposal for reckoning time by 24 hours. This was not passed. It is not a question that affects India.
- (2) France's proposal regarding official instructions counting as one word. This was adopted. All instructions regarding reply paid messages will count as one word.
- (3) Switzerland's proposal, supported by Berne and Cable Companies, regarding the obligatory addition in address, in cases of doubt, of the name of State or Country. The Article has been revised and there is now no chance of any misunderstanding. The feeling was, without imposing needless restrictions, to throw the onus on to the "Nomenclature" prepared by the Berne Bureau which should be taken as the guide.

- (4) Great Britain's proposal to prohibit use of registered addresses in telegrams which have to be despatched by post was withdrawn.
- (5) Austria's proposal that the name of the Telegraph Office of destination should be signalled twice—once in preamble and once in address, Bulgaria's proposal, which is to same effect, was adopted.
- (6) France's proposal for a uniform charge of 50 centimes for sea postage to be retained by office of origin, carried.
- (7) France's proposals regarding refunds were adopted.

Para. 9 gives certain propositions which should be opposed, as follows:—

- (1) Bulgaria's proposal to introduce in the accounts the charges for rectificatory telegrams. Not carried.
- (2) Belgium's proposal to omit date in a telegram. Not carried.
- (3) Bulgaria's proposal to charge for indication of route. Unsupported. Fell through.
- (4) France's proposal to withdraw limit of 30 words for a reply-paid message. Not carried.
- (5) Bulgaria's proposal to increase charge for repetition from one quarter to double the original charge. Not carried.
- (6) Switzerland's proposal to refund on mutilated messages on which charge for repetition has not been paid, was rejected.
- (7) Germany's proposal to charge a fee for investigating complaints. It was made optional for an Administration to charge or not.
- (8) Switzerland's proposal that all complaints should be investigated. Made optional. Enquiries can be exceptionally asked for by offices in the interest of the service in case of serious or repeated irregularities.

19. It will be seen from the foregoing that in all minor matters the results of the Conference have been such as desired by the Indian Administration, including notably the fifteen letters and five figures in plain language telegrams, and for instructions regarding "Reply Paid" to count as one word, which latter are substantial concessions.

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No. 88 T.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

CIVIL WORKS.

Telegraph.

To

THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.*
 THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.*
 THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.†
 THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES AND
 OUDH, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.*
 THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF BURMA.‡

Calcutta, the 25th January 1897.

SIR,

With reference to correspondence ending with Public Works Department letter No. ^{* 53T.} ^{27th February} ^{13th April} ^{10th July}, dated the 1896, I am directed to forward, for the

information of the Chamber(s) of Commerce at ^{Bombay and Karachi} ^{Madras and Coconada} ^{Calcutta} ^{Cannanore} ^{Rangoon}, the accompany-

ing extracts from a joint report, dated the 10th August 1896, by Mr. P. V. Luke, C.I.E., Deputy Director General of Telegraphs, and Mr. B. T. Ffinch, Director-in-Chief of the Indo-European Telegraph Department, who were the two delegates deputed to represent the interests of the Government of India at the International Telegraph Conference held at Budapest this year. These extracts give the results of the discussions at the Conference as regards the proposed reduction of the rate for messages between India and Europe, the reduction in rates between India, China and Japan and the obligatory use of the Berne Official Telegraphic Vocabulary, together with certain other questions that came up at the Conference.

2. It will be seen that though every possible effort was made by the Indian delegates, as well as by the delegates of the British Post Office, to induce the representatives of the Joint Purse, the principal partner in which is the Eastern Telegraph Company, to consent to some reduction in the rates for telegrams between India and Europe, no success in this direction was obtained for the reasons detailed in the report. On the other hand, very substantial reductions were granted by the Eastern and Eastern Extension Telegraph Companies in the rates between India and the Straits, China, Japan, Mauritius and South Africa. Another valuable concession was the indefinite postponement of the obligatory use in code telegrams of words extracted from the official vocabulary together with the proviso that before this question can come up again the vocabulary will have to be enlarged to an extent that will, it is hoped, render the work adequate to meet all the requirements of commerce. Among other changes in the regulations in the direction of liberality may also be mentioned the reduction in the charges for plain language telegrams, as distinguished from code telegrams, and for figures by allowing fifteen letters and five cyphers to pass as one word instead of ten letters and three cyphers as hitherto.

3. The Conference has, in the opinion of the Government of India, been productive of some very satisfactory results and, in the course of the proceedings, careful consideration was given to all the representations that have been made by the Chambers of Commerce in India on the various points at issue. It is a matter of great regret to Government that some reduction was not secured in the rates on telegrams between India and Europe, but it is hoped that the thorough discussion of the subject that has taken place will pave the way to reductions being obtained at no distant date.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

M. B. S.

Colonel, R.E.,

Secretary to the Govt. of India.

Documents accompanying.

Extracts referred to.

To The Secy to the Govt of Madras.
P.W. Department.