

1877.

VICTORIA.

TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION VIA JAVA.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

SIR,

Government House, Sydney, 5th October 1877.

I have the honor to forward to Your Excellency a printed copy of a despatch, with its enclosures, which I have received from the Secretary of State, with reference to a resolution agreed to by the Conference held here in January last, upon the subject of telegraphic communication through Java.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your Excellency's most obedient humble servant,

HERCULES ROBINSON.

His Excellency Sir George F. Bowen, G.C.M.G., &c., &c., &c.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES TO GOVERNOR SIR HERCULES ROBINSON, G.C.M.G.

No. 58.

SIR,

Downing street, 9 July 1877.

I have received your despatch, No. 27, of the 1st of March, enclosing a letter addressed to me by Sir John Robertson, as President of the Conference of Delegates from all the Australasian Colonies held at Sydney in January last to consider the subject of telegraphic communication, in which he brings to my notice a resolution agreed to unanimously by the Conference, requesting the aid of Her Majesty's Government in obtaining the assent of the Netherlands Government to the employment of English operators on the land lines in Java, with the view of avoiding the mistakes and mutilation to which messages are now subjected in transmission through that island.

2. I have been in communication with the Postmaster-General and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs respecting the resolution; and I enclose for your information copies of the correspondence which has passed on the subject.

3. You will perceive from the despatch from the British Minister at the Hague, enclosed in the letter from the Foreign Office of the 30th of June, that the Dutch Consul-General at Melbourne has already called the attention of his Government to the complaints as to the administration of the telegraphs in Java brought forward at the Conference, and that the Governor-General of Netherlands-India has, in consequence, been asked for explanations on the subject.

4. The Dutch Government will, however, forward to the Governor-General the further papers communicated to them through Her Majesty's Government, and have promised, as soon as his answer is received, to state their own views upon the subject.

5. In the meantime, I request that you will communicate to the Governments of the other Australasian Colonies the information contained in the correspondence now sent to you.

I have, &c.,

CARNARVON.

C.O. to G.P.O.,
28 April 1877;
P.O. to F.O., 18 May,
C.O. to F.O., 28
May 1877.
F.O., 30 June.

[ENCLOSURES.]

THE COLONIAL OFFICE TO THE POST OFFICE.

SIR,

Downing street, 28 April 1877.

No. 27.
March 1877.

I am directed by the Earl of Carnarvon to transmit to you, to be laid before the Postmaster-General, a copy of a despatch from the Governor of New South Wales forwarding a letter addressed to His Lordship by the Colonial Secretary, as President of the Conference of Delegates from the various Australasian Colonies recently held at Sydney, to consider the subject of telegraphic communication, requesting the aid of Her Majesty's Government in obtaining the assent of the Government of Netherlands-India to the employment of English operators on the land lines in Java.

Lord Carnarvon would be glad to be favored with the views of the Postmaster-General, before communicating with the Foreign Office upon the subject.

A copy of the proceedings of the Conference at Sydney was forwarded to you in the letter from this department of the 10th of April.

I am, &c.,

W. R. MALCOLM.

THE POST OFFICE TO THE COLONIAL OFFICE.

SIR,

General Post Office, London, 18 May 1877.

Telegraphs

With reference to your letter of the 28th ultimo, transmitting a copy of a despatch with its enclosures from the Governor of New South Wales, respecting the employment of English operators on the telegraph land lines in Java, I am directed by the Postmaster-General to forward, for the information of the Earl of Carnarvon, a copy of a memorandum which Lord John Manners has received from the Eastern Extension, Australasia and China Telegraph Company, respecting the causes of the irregularities of which complaint is made in the resolution adopted at the Telegraphic Conference recently held in Sydney.

It will be observed from this memorandum that the irregularities in question are not solely attributable to the operators employed by the Dutch Government, but that they are in a great measure owing, first to the frequent repetitions at intermediate stations which the messages undergo, and secondly to the faulty condition of the telegraph lines.

If the lines were in good condition it would no doubt be possible, as pointed out by Colonel Glover, to avoid these intermediate transmissions, and to work direct between Batavia and Banjoewangie, thus obviating a serious risk of error; and, having regard to the importance of reliable means of telegraphic communication between this country and the Australasian Colonies, it appears to Lord John Manners to be desirable that this should be pointed out to the Dutch Government, and the need for improving the lines impressed upon it.

It would no doubt be further desirable to employ English operators to work the instruments, as suggested in the resolution, although the precise meaning of the resolution is not clear, as it does not state by whom such clerks are to be employed. The traffic through Java is now worked by the Dutch Government, who, it will be seen from the memorandum furnished by the Eastern Extension, Australasia and China Telegraph Company, employ as telegraph clerks half-castes, who have, it is alleged, a very imperfect knowledge of English. Lord John Manners presumes that the object of the resolution is to get the Dutch Government to employ English clerks instead of these half-castes, and His Lordship concurs in the desirability of representing the expediency of such a change to that Government. As an alternative plan, he thinks it might be suggested whether an arrangement might not be made to allow the Telegraph Company above mentioned to transmit the messages through Java, as they have offices at Batavia and Banjoewangie, and they would, it is believed, be quite willing to undertake the work.

I am, &c.,

JOHN TILLEY.

Memorandum.

The accompanying sketch shows the whole telegraphic system in Java, the black line passing *via* Banjoemaas being the international one. Messages, however, pass just as frequently by one as by the other.

The lines appear to be very defective, and are hung from the branches of trees on the road side, occasionally poles being put in wherever trees are wanting. The consequence is constant contact and destruction of insulation.

The lines are generally worked through two transmitting stations. By the north line, from Batavia to Samarang, Samarang to Soerabaya, Soerabaya to Banjoewangie. On the southern line it is worked from Batavia to Banjoemaas, Banjoemaas to Soerabaya, and Soerabaya to Banjoewangie.

The climate is very moist and is inimical to good insulation, and at the same time favorable to vegetation, which interferes with the line.

The clerks employed are half-castes, who have a very imperfect knowledge of English.

The great thing required is an improvement in the line which would enable it to be worked without the intervention of the two transmitting stations. The whole distance between Batavia and Banjoewangie is about 650 miles, and there is no reason why it should not be worked direct, or by the insertion of a relay at some intermediate station. If the line were placed in such good order as to enable this to be done, it would overcome one of the principal causes of error, which is, the constant repetition. And, in this case, if English operators were also employed, both at Batavia and Banjoewangie, I think almost all errors would be eliminated; but the *sine qua non* is putting the line in thorough good order.

Another improvement required is to get night and day service. The Dutch now only keep their lines open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. The cable is consequently kept idle from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m., as it is of no use bringing messages on if they are blocked in Java.

During the year 1876 the errors over the Dutch land lines amounted to about one in every second message; whereas on the cable between Madras and Australia, over a distance ten times as great, the errors did not average more than one in every fifty messages. This fact will give an idea of the state of the working in Java.

J. G. GLOVER.

66 Old Broad street, London, E.C., May 9, 1877.

THE COLONIAL OFFICE TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE.

SIR,

Downing street, 26 May 1877.

I am directed by the Earl of Carnarvon to transmit to you, to be laid before the Earl of Derby, a copy of a Report and Minutes of Proceedings, &c., of a Conference of Delegates from all the Australasian Colonies, recently held at Sydney, to consider the question of the duplication of the telegraph cable between Australasia and Europe.

2. It will be seen that the Conference separated without arriving at any definite conclusion on the subject, but a resolution was passed unanimously (p. 15 of Minutes) that, having in view the serious annoyance and loss occasioned by the mutilation of messages in transmission through Java, the aid of Her Majesty's Government should be asked in obtaining permission from the Government of Netherlands-India to employ English operators on the land lines in Java.

3. This resolution has now been transmitted formally to Lord Carnarvon, in a despatch from the Governor of New South Wales, of which I am to enclose a copy. I am also to enclose a copy of a letter from the General Post Office, containing the views of that department upon the subject.

No. 27.
1 March 1877.
18 May 1877.

4. It will be seen that the Eastern Extension, Australasia and China Telegraph Company, who have been consulted on the subject, state that the irregularities complained of in Java are not solely attributable to the operators employed by the Dutch Government, but are in a great measure owing to the frequent repetitions which the messages undergo at intermediate stations in Java, owing to the faulty condition of the telegraph lines in that island: Lord John Manners therefore suggests that this should be pointed out to the Dutch Government, and the need for improving the lines impressed upon it.

5. Lord J. Manners concurs, however, in the desirability of representing to the Dutch Government the expediency of substituting English clerks in Java for the present half-caste clerks, who have, it is alleged, a very imperfect knowledge of English; but His Lordship suggests, as an alternative plan, that it might be suggested to the Dutch Government that the Eastern Extension, Australasia and China Telegraph Company, who have already offices at Batavia and Banjoewangie, should be allowed to undertake the transmission of the messages through Java.

6. Lord Carnarvon desires me to request that you will move Lord Derby to forward the papers which accompany this letter to the British Minister at the Hague, with instructions to communicate with the Dutch Government upon the subject, and to endeavour to obtain its assent to the employment of English operators upon the land lines in Java, as requested by the resolution passed at the Sydney Conference, and also to the other improvements in the telegraph system of Java suggested in the letter from the General Post Office.

7. In view, also, of the great importance which Her Majesty's Government necessarily attach to having a trustworthy means of telegraphic communication with the Australasian Colonies, Lord Carnarvon requests that Admiral Harris may be desired to do everything in his power to secure a favorable consideration by the Dutch Government to the requests now brought forward.

I am, &c.,

R. H. MEADE.

THE FOREIGN OFFICE TO THE COLONIAL OFFICE.

SIR,

Foreign Office, 30 June 1877.

With reference to your letter of the 26th ultimo, I am directed by the Secretary of State for this department to transmit to you herewith, for the information of the Earl of Carnarvon, a despatch from Her Majesty's Minister at the Hague, on the subject of telegraphic communication with Australia through Java.

I am, &c.,

T. V. LESTER.

SIR E. A. J. HARRIS TO THE EARL OF DERBY.

Commercial, No. 51.

MY LORD,

The Hague, 26 June 1877.

In obedience to the instructions contained in Your Lordship's despatch, No. 37, Commercial, dated the 2nd instant, I addressed a note, copy of which, together with its enclosures, I have the honor to transmit, calling the attention of the Netherlands Government to the mutilations of telegrams to and from Australia in their transit through Java; and stating the suggestions on the part of the Eastern Extension, Australasia and China Telegraph Company, with a view to a remedy. I at the same time communicated the opinions of Her Majesty's Postmaster-General on the subject.

To M. de Willebois, of June 16, 1877, with three enclosures.

I have the honor to enclose copy of the answer to my note from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in which His Excellency states that the Dutch Consul-General at Melbourne had already informed the Netherlands Government of the complaints formulated at the "Cable Conference" on the subject of the administration of telegraphs in Java; and that in consequence the Governor-General of Netherlands-India had been invited to give information on the subject.

From M. de Willebois, June 23, 1877.

M. de Willebois promises that as soon as an answer has been received from the Governor-General, the views of the Netherlands Government on the subject would be communicated to me.

In an interview with M. de Willebois yesterday, I requested that copies of my note and its enclosures should be forwarded to the authorities in Java. His Excellency promised that this should be done.

I have, &c.,

E. A. J. HARRIS.

P.S.—I have the honor to return herewith the enclosures, in original, in Your Lordship's despatch No. 37, Commercial, of the 2nd instant.—E.A.J.H.

SIR E. A. J. HARRIS TO M. DE WILLEBOIS.

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE,

British Legation, The Hague, 16 June 1877.

In obedience to instructions which I have received from H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, I have the honor to transmit herewith to Your Excellency copy of a resolution which was passed unanimously at a Conference of Delegates from all the Australian Colonies, recently held at Sydney, on certain matters connected with the telegraph cable between Australia and Europe.

The resolution in question refers to the serious annoyance and loss occasioned by the mutilation of the messages in transmission through Java, and expresses the desire that permission be obtained from the Government of Netherlands-India to employ English operators on the land-lines in that colony.

In connection with this resolution I enclose copy of a paper which was laid before the Conference above mentioned, which contains a few specimens of some of the messages received by the Associated Press of the Australian Colonies, as an illustration of the effect of these mutilations.

I likewise transmit extracts from a letter from H. M. Postmaster-General, containing the views of his department on the subject, and enclosing copy of a memorandum drawn up by the Eastern Extension, Australasia and China Telegraph Company, who have been consulted in this matter.

It will be seen by this memorandum that the irregularities complained of in Java are not solely attributable to the operators employed by the Dutch Indian Government, but are in a great measure owing to the frequent repetitions which the messages undergo at the intermediate stations in Java, owing to the faulty condition of the telegraph lines in that island.

H. M. Postmaster-General, Your Excellency will perceive, concurs in the desirability of the expediency of substituting English clerks in Java for the present half-caste clerks, who have, it is alleged, a very imperfect knowledge of English; but the Postmaster suggests, as an alternative plan, that the Eastern Extension, Australasia and China Telegraph Company, who have already offices at Batavia, should be allowed to undertake the transmission of their messages through Java.

I need scarcely point out to Your Excellency the great importance which H. M. Government necessarily attach to having a trustworthy means of telegraphic communication with the Australian Colonies; and I have been instructed by the Earl of Derby to bring prominently before Your Excellency the request contained in the resolution passed by the Telegraph Conference of Sydney, that permission should be obtained from the Netherlands Government of India for the employment of English operators on the land lines in Java, as also to call your serious attention to the opinions expressed in the letter from the General Post Office as to the necessity for a general improvement in the telegraph lines in that colony.

I avail, &c.,

E. A. J. HARRIS.

M. DE WILLEBOIS TO SIR E. HARRIS.

MONSIEUR L'AMIRAL,

La Hague, le 23 juin 1877.

En réponse provisoire à votre office du 16 de ce mois j'ai l'honneur de porter à votre connaissance que le Consul Général des Pays Bas à Melbourne ayant déjà informé le Gouvernement du Roi des plaintes formulées par la Cable Conférence à Sydney au sujet de l'administration des télégraphes dans l'île de Java, le Gouverneur Général des Indes Néerlandaises a été invité à donner des éclaircissements à cet égard.

Après que la réponse de Monsieur Van Lansberge me sera connue, je ne manquerai pas, Monsieur l'Amiral, de vous informer ultérieurement des vues du Gouvernement de sa Majesté, et je saisis en attendant cette occasion, &c., &c.

F. D. D. DE WILLEBOIS.