

1859.

VICTORIA.

CORRESPONDENCE

RELATIVE TO

TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION

BETWEEN

GREAT BRITAIN AND AUSTRALIA,

Via SINGAPORE and JAVA.

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

[COPY.]

SIR,

Downing Street,
2nd May, 1859.

With reference to my predecessor's circular despatch of the 29th May, and to mine of the 27th July last, I have to inform you that Mr. F. Gisborne, brother of the gentleman whose project of a telegraphic communication by way of India between this country and Australia, was then announced to you, is now on his way to New South Wales, and contemplates visiting several of the Australian colonies.

Mr. Gisborne has been represented to me as a gentleman of character and intelligence, and of great experience in all matters of the above description, but I must leave him to explain for himself the object which he has in view; for, although I consider that the execution of such a scheme would confer the greatest benefit on the Australian colonies and the Empire, I cannot undertake to express an opinion on the merits of particular plans for accomplishing the object.

I take this opportunity of calling your attention, in connection with this subject, to two principles, which, after considerable recent discussion, have been at length acquiesced in and adopted generally, and on which Her Majesty's Government are prepared to act in cases of a character similar to the present. First, to grant no exclusive privileges; and, secondly, to provide that any guarantees of interest should only take effect after the lines are in working order, and for so long only as they continue to remain in that condition.

Governor,

Sir Henry Barkly, K.C.B.,
&c., &c., &c.,
Victoria.

I have, &c.,
CARNARVON,
In the absence of
SIR E. B. LYTTON.

[COPY.]

SIR,

7th July, 1859,
Melbourne.

At the interview you honored me with this day, on my arrival from England, I submitted to you the arrangement I had concluded, on behalf of the Promoters of the Australian telegraph, with the Netherlands Government on the 19th of March last, by which that Government binds

itself to lay a submarine line from Singapore to Batavia this year, and to add a wire to the existing land line from Batavia to Banjouwangi (extreme east end of Java) for the transmission of messages to and from Australia.

You also perused the conditions, most of which are in the nature of working arrangements, for the mutual transmission of messages, under which Her Majesty's Government has given the Netherland Government permission to establish a station at Singapore, for the purpose of working the Singapore-Batavia line.

I have to state that the cable for this line is already manufactured, and will be laid next October. Also that the cable for the unfinished portion of the Indian line from Aden to Kurrachee is also manufactured, and will be laid next December.

From Kurrachee to Rangoon there exist land lines, and the Indian Government has bound itself to complete the telegraph from Rangoon to Singapore.

The time seems therefore arrived for the Australian Colonies to take steps to extend the Dutch line from E. Java to their continent.

By the proposed route the Australian line would leave E. Java, and, following a chain of islands, reach Timor, cross over to the North coast of Australia, and reach Cape York, thence it would follow the coast inside the Great Barrier reef, and terminate at Moreton Bay, after traversing a distance of 3,024 nautical miles.

An examination of the Admiralty charts will show that from Timor to Moreton Bay, or a distance 2,370 miles, the sea is as well sounded as the British Channel, and the cable will no where lie in over 100 fathoms, and that a soft bottom can everywhere be found. Throughout its course it will be essentially a coast line, lying in depths out of which it can be easily picked up for repairs, and with the facility afforded it of establishing a proper number of intermediate stations, thus enabling the cable to perform its full complement of work, whereas when long distances have to be telegraphed through, the transmitting power of a cable is enormously lessened.

The promoters propose that £800,000 be raised for the purpose of constructing and working the submarine line from E. Java to Moreton Bay. This sum includes a sufficient reserve fund.

The capital for the Indian line, which from Suez to Kurrachee is submarine, and is 50 miles shorter than the Australian line, but has in addition 240 miles of land line through Egypt, is also £800,000.

The class of cable proposed for the Australian line, and the prices, *mutatis mutandis*, are the same as have been approved of in the case of the Indian telegraph by Her Majesty's and the Indian Governments.

The promoters undertake that the Australian line shall be completed in two years, and be laid at the risk of the contractors.

Whether the line shall be held and worked by the several Colonial Governments as their joint property, or whether a private company shall hold and work it, are points which the promoters desire to leave entirely to the decision of the Colonies.

If the line is to belong to the Colonial Governments, the necessary capital will have to be raised, either out of surplus revenue, or as a public debt by means of bonds. If a company is to be formed a guarantee of six per cent on the capital must be given. In either case there will be a liability to be apportioned among the Colonies, and probably the most equitable measure, available for such apportionment is the existing contribution of each Colony towards the colonial moiety of the postal subsidy. Under this basis, as I am informed, the share of Victoria would be 58½ per cent. of the capital.

The proportion of letters sent and received offers a basis for estimating the proportion of messages that will be sent and received.

I trust, Sir, that you will submit this subject to the consideration of the Government of Victoria, and that immediate steps will be taken to consult the other Colonial Governments, so as to bring the questions upon which a common agreement must be obtained to speedy and happy solution.

I have, &c.,

F. GISBORNE.

His Excellency Sir Henry Barkly, K.C.B.,
&c., &c., &c.

Conditions communicated to me by H. E. M. Rochussen, Minister of the Dutch Colonies, on the 24th March, 1859, under which the British Government gave the Netherland Government permission to land a Submarine Telegraph Cable, and to establish and administer a Station at Singapore.

FIRST CONDITION.

That the Netherland Government will not grant any monopoly tending to prevent the establishment at any future time of new telegraphic lines between its Indian possessions and Australia on the one hand, and Singapore on the other, but they may exercise their discretion in admitting the principle of competition.

Protection may, however, be granted to the promoters of any Australian line during a reasonable period of construction.

As regards the telegraphic communication between the Netherland-Indian possessions and Singapore, the Netherland Government is not bound to admit the competition of any other line with that in their own hands, except in the case provided for in the clause marked *b* of the Fifth Condition.

SECOND CONDITION.

That the telegraph in question shall always be available for the use of the British Government and public, and be considered as a component part of the line between Great Britain and Australia.

THIRD CONDITION.

That the British Government shall be placed on the same footing as the Dutch Government as regards priority of messages.

FOURTH CONDITION.

That the messages of the British Government may be sent in cypher, and shall not be subject to examination.

FIFTH CONDITION.

That in case the Government cable between Singapore and Batavia should at any time be proved inadequate to meet the requirements of the public, the Netherland Government will, at their option—

(a.) Lay down one or more additional cables, or—

(b.) Grant a concession for laying such additional cable or cables either to the British Government or to a private company.

The Netherland Government shall always provide the requisite number of land wires between Batavia and the points where the Australian cables are landed.

SIXTH CONDITION.

That the employment of British agents shall be allowed at all stations, corresponding to points of junction of a submarine cable with a land line on the direct route between the British possessions and Australia.

SEVENTH CONDITION.

That the tariff for through messages shall be adjusted in conjunction with Her Majesty's Government, and shall not be fixed or altered without their previous consent.

Her Majesty's Government will admit the principle of reciprocity in the application of these conditions to that portion of the telegraphic line of communication with Her Majesty's dominions which is in the hands of Her Majesty's Government.

Ld. A.
No. 110.

[Contd.]

MONSIEUR,

La Haye, le 19 Mars, 1859.

J'ai l'honneur de porter à votre connaissance que Sa Majesté le Roi m'autorise à accepter la proposition que vous avez faite au Gouvernement de Sa Majesté au nom de votre frère le Sieur Lionel Gisborne, tendant à annuler la concession qui lui a été accordé sous date de 16 Janvier, 1858, pour l'établissement, le service, et l'exploitation d'une ligne sous-marin et des stations télégraphiques dans les possessions du Royaume des Pays-bas aux Indes Orientales, reliant les lignes télégraphiques des possessions Anglaises aux dites Indes et celles du continent de l'Australie.

Quant aux trois conditions qui servent de base à la dite proposition, je m'empresse de vous faire part :—

I. Que je viens de signer un contrat entre le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté le Roi et Messieurs Newall et Compagnie, pour la pose d'un télégraphe sous-marin entre Batavia et Singapore dans le cours de l'année 1859.

II. Que le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté le Roi autorise les entrepreneurs du télégraphe Australien, qui sont ou seront représentés par vous, d'établir et d'administrer une station à Coupang (Timor) et de rattacher leurs fils télégraphiques venant de l'Australie, aux lignes télégraphiques du Gouvernement des Indes Néerlandaises à Banjouwangi (côte orientale de Java), et que le dit Gouvernement ajoutera un fil à la ligne existante de Batavia à Banjouwangi, aussitôt que ce dernier lieu sera relié à l'Australie, pour la transmission des dépêches allant à ou venant de l'Australie ;—le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté le Roi se réserve la faculté d'employer ses propres agents pour la transmission des dépêches Néerlandaises, à la station de Coupang et à trois autres stations sur la ligne qui unira les possessions Néerlandaises avec l'Australie.

III. Que les bases pour la transmission des dépêches privées allant à ou venant de l'Australie sur les lignes du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté le Roi entre Singapore et Banjouwangi sont acceptées par le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté le Roi, comme suit :—

1. Les dépêches privées allant à ou venant de l'Australie pourront être transmises sur les lignes télégraphiques Néerlandaises entre Singapore et Banjouwangi en chiffres ou autres signes aussi bien que de la manière ordinaire.
2. Les dites dépêches ne seront examinées que pour le contrôle du tarif.
3. Les employés de la Compagnie à former pour l'établissement du télégraphe Australien, nécessaires pour la transmission des dites dépêches aux stations de Singapore, de Batavia, et de Banjouwangi, seront agréés par le Gouverneur-General des Indes Néerlandaises, sur la proposition d'un agent de la dite Compagnie.
4. Le tarif des dites dépêches sera réglé entre les Gouvernements Britannique et Néerlandais, de commun accord avec la Compagnie à former.
5. Un observera de part et d'autre parfaite égalité quant à l'ordre de l'expédition ou la transmission des dépêches privées.
6. Les dépêches officielles et privées Néerlandaises seront sur un pied égal quant au tarif sur les lignes qui uniront l'Australie aux possessions Néerlandaises, avec les dépêches officielles et privées Britanniques.

Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté le Roi sera libérés de tout engagement envers les entrepreneurs du télégraphe Australien, représentés par vous, si dans le terme de quatre ans, à partir de ce jour, ils n'auront pas réuni les possessions Néerlandaises avec l'Australie; mais pendant ce terme il ne traitera qu'avec eux.

Dans le cas que le Gouvernements de l'Australie préfèrent de tenir dans leurs mains la pose et l'administration des lignes télégraphiques qui uniront l'Australie avec l'Inde Néerlandaise, ils seront admis à remplacer les entrepreneurs ou la Compagnie privée sous tous les rapports.

A Monsieur Francis Gisborne,
Hotel, Paulex.

Le Ministre d'Etat,
Ministre des Colonies,
ROCHUSSEN.

[COPY.]

Department of Electric Telegraph,
Office of the General Superintendent,
Melbourne, 21st July, 1859.

SIR,

Owing to the late period at which the papers relative to Mr. Francis Gisborne's proposition on behalf of the promoters of the India and Australia telegraphic communication have reached my hands, I find that my almost immediate departure with the Bass' Straits cable laying expedition, will preclude my entering into the details of the subject so extendedly as I could have wished, or from affording to it the lengthened consideration which its obvious importance clearly demands.

My views have, hitherto, been altogether in favor of a connection with India and Europe *via* King George's Sound and Western Australia, as proposed by Sir J. Carmichael and Mr. Brett, (both gentlemen of large experience in connection with the practical development of submarine telegraphs), and, without conceding that there is anything in Mr. Gisborne's proposition at all adverse to my previously expressed opinion, as to the practicability and manifest utility of a telegraphic connection to the westward, to act in unison with our existing mail contract, I would beg to state that the evidently well digested scheme of the promoters of the India and Australia telegraph appears to me as deserving of most earnest consideration.

Since the date of Mr. Gisborne's communication of the 7th instant I have had several personal conferences with that gentleman, in which I have discussed with him most of the many important points involved in the details of the project which he has brought forward, and the result has been that the evidence presented, is, in my opinion, strongly in favor of the route *via* Java and Singapore, subject, at the same time, to the several modifications which I have suggested, and the necessity for which has been virtually admitted by Mr. Gisborne.

1st. Admitting the preference in favor of the north-eastern route—it would be necessary to decide as to the advisability of terminating the submarine connection at Moreton Bay (as proposed by Mr. Gisborne), or of continuing the line seaward to Sydney Heads.

In the absence of any reliable information as to the exact nature of the existing communication between Sydney and Moreton Bay, or of the intentions of the Government of New South Wales as to the extension of their colonial lines northward, my impression is in favor of continuing the submarine line to Sydney—as being more likely to prove generally satisfactory to the population already centred to the southward of New South Wales, than if the terminal of the submarine line were to be determined at any remote point north of that colony.

2nd. The advisability of carrying a line overland from the northern boundary of Victoria, direct to some advantageous point at the head of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and thence by submarine to Singapore, as already defined.

That land lines are preferable to submarine, especially on the borders of a new and undeveloped country, cannot I think be questioned; but where difficulties have to be overcome of the character likely to be presented in traversing comparatively unexplored and remote districts, at present occupied, so far as can be learned, by tribes of aborigines who, if not

altogether inimical to the interests of the white-man and advancing civilization, would still, probably, interfere materially with the permanent success of a line of telegraph, the question assumes a shape, the consideration of which is open to the most vague speculation. I am, therefore, inclined to the belief, that in the present instance, the sea route might be the most advantageous of the two; although I would strongly recommend, that before any decision be arrived at, a thoroughly practical examination of both routes should be made and fully reported upon—having in view, of course, the practicability of establishing, either overland or by submarine, telegraphic communication with a stated point on the borders of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Through the excellent means available for such a purpose by the presence of the C. W. S. *Victoria* on the one hand, and that of Dr. F. Mueller (whose name is intimately connected with the northern exploration) on the other, I think that within a reasonable period, and at a very moderate outlay, some really valuable and definite conclusion might be obtainable. And while stating my convictions to be at the present time in favor of a sea route, I would still observe, that, in the event of a favourable route being found overland, I would recommend its adoption, in preference to the submarine, for the reasons mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph; but I shall leave the consideration of the point referred to in the hands of the Government, as the matter will be one, with reference to expense, for the decision of the several Colonial Governments interested in the speedy establishing of telegraphic communication with Europe.

3rd. I have suggested to Mr. Gisborne the advisability of leaving open, for future decision, that branch of the question which will bear upon the character of the cable to be employed, and I have been met by the assurance, that the promoters of the India and Australia telegraph are in no wise bound either to adopt the sample of cable exhibited by Mr. Gisborne, or the specific estimates referring thereto, but that any approved construction of cable may be adopted within the estimated outlay named, say £800,000.

4th. I consider that the probable expenditure mentioned by Mr. Gisborne is not overstated, although I would wish it to be understood that I do not agree with him as to the correctness of the charge proposed for the description of cable he has submitted for inspection (a portion of the Red Sea line), as I believe that a more durable, and more efficient cable, might be obtained at a more reasonable cost, judging from the contract price of the Bass' Straits cable, now about to be laid down.

5th. Although I do not feel that I am required to pass my opinion as to the sum, or *quota*, allotted to Victoria in the divisional proportion of Mr. Gisborne's scheme, still I would beg to express my belief that the proportions alluded to should not be based upon the postal statistics, but upon the number and respective relations of the several mercantile firms in the four chief cities, say, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, and Hobart Town, as telegraphic communication with Great Britain and Europe would be essentially beneficial, and principally available, to the mercantile community and to the conservators of commercial and general information.

In conclusion, I would beg to recommend that the Government of Victoria should place itself in correspondence with the respective Colonial Governments of New South Wales, South Australia, and Tasmania, with the view of eliciting their intentions as to any action proposed to be taken in reference to Mr. Gisborne's scheme.

I have, &c.,
SAM. W. MCGOWAN.

The Honorable the Postmaster-General.