

1856.

Legislative Assembly.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

REPORT

FROM

THE SELECT COMMITTEE

ON THE

ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH;

TOGETHER WITH

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE,

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE,

AND APPENDIX.

ORDERED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY TO BE PRINTED,

18 December, 1856.

Sydney :

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1856.

EXTRACTS FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

VOTES No. 36. FRIDAY, 31 OCTOBER, 1856.

12. Electric Telegraph :—Mr. Parkes moved, pursuant to *amended* notice,—
(1.) That a Select Committee be appointed to consider and report upon the subject of the introduction into New South Wales of the Electric Telegraph; more especially with reference to the rapid extension of that means of communication in the adjacent Colony of Victoria.
(2.) That such Committee consist of the following Members, viz.:—Mr. Arnold, Mr. Faucett, Mr. Hay, Mr. Macarthur, Mr. Irving, Mr. Cowper, Mr. Weekes, and Mr. Parkes.
Question—(1.) That a Select Committee be appointed to consider and report upon the subject of the introduction into New South Wales of the Electric Telegraph; more especially with reference to the rapid extension of that means of communication in the adjacent Colony of Victoria,—put and passed.
Question—(2.) That such Committee consist of the following Members, viz.:—Mr. Arnold, Mr. Faucett, Mr. Hay, Mr. Macarthur, Mr. Irving, Mr. Cowper, Mr. Weekes, and Mr. Parkes,—put and passed.
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VOTES No. 49. WEDNESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER, 1856.

11. Proposed Establishment of a Line of Electric Telegraph :—Mr. Hay moved, pursuant to notice, That the Correspondence respecting the proposed construction of a Line of Electric Telegraph, laid upon the Table by him yesterday, be referred to the Select Committee on the proposed Establishment of a Line of Electric Telegraph.
Question put and passed.
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VOTES No. 62. THURSDAY, 18 DECEMBER, 1856.

2. Electric Telegraph :—Mr. Parkes, as Chairman, brought up the Report from, and laid upon the Table the Evidence taken before, the Select Committee appointed on the 31st October last to consider and report upon the subject of the introduction into New South Wales of the Electric Telegraph, more especially with reference to the rapid extension of that means of communication in the adjacent Colony of Victoria.
Ordered to be printed.
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ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH

REPORT.

THE SELECT COMMITTEE of the Legislative Assembly, appointed on the 31st October last, *"to consider and Report upon the subject of the introduction into New South Wales, of the Electric Telegraph, more especially with reference to the rapid extension of that means of communication in the adjacent colony of Victoria,"* and to whom was referred, on the 26th November last, certain *"correspondence respecting the proposed construction of a Line of Electric Telegraph,"* have agreed to the following Report:—

In carrying out their enquiry, your Committee have carefully considered the documents referred to them by your Honorable House on the 26th November, and they have also taken the evidence of several gentlemen who, from their knowledge of the general subject, and from the attention they had previously given to the proposed adoption of Telegraphic communication in this Colony, were enabled to bring much valuable information to bear on the enquiry.

Besides the lines which have for some time past been in full operation connecting Queenscliffe, Geelong, Williamstown, and Sandridge, with Melbourne, the Government of Victoria are now constructing Telegraphic Lines from Geelong to Ballarat, a distance of fifty-eight miles, and from Melbourne to Sandhurst, by way of Kyneton and Castlemaine, one hundred and twenty-five miles, and the preliminary steps have been taken to bring every considerable point of the population into telegraphic communication with the neighbouring Colonies by one complete system. With this view, negotiations have been opened with the other Governments, and already a competent officer, on the part of South Australia, has visited Melbourne, to collect data from the practical experience of the authorities there, and has examined the country between that city and Adelaide, preparatory to the commencement of a line uniting the two capitals. On the 20th September last, the Chief Secretary of Victoria opened a correspondence with the Government at Sydney, proposing to place on the Estimates for 1857, a sufficient sum to open an inter-colonial line as far as Albury, in the direction of this Metropolis, provided the Government of New South Wales were prepared to continue it from that point. The distance from Melbourne to Albury is 250 miles; from Albury to Sydney 380 miles. The line on the Victoria side will connect Sandhurst, Benalla, May Day Hills, and Beechworth in its course. In Tasmania contracts have been entered into for the construction of a line of telegraphic communication between Hobart Town and Launceston, and it is proposed to unite that island with the Continental Colonies, by sinking a submarine cable at Cape Otway, and carrying it thence to King's Island, Barren Island, and Cape Grim. From that point of the Tasmanian coast the line will run along the northern shore to Port Frederick, and thence to Port Sorrel and Georgetown, where it will connect itself with the Line from Hobart Town to Launceston. On the Victoria side of the Straits the Telegraphic connection will be carried to Cape Otway from Queenscliffe.

Such is an outline of the Australian scheme, which may be said to have been originated by the Colony of Victoria; and towards the completion of which New South Wales is the only Colony which, as yet, has made no advance. The questions submitted for the consideration of your Committee have assumed a much more urgent character from the comprehensive plans which, there is every reason to believe, the other Colonies will cordially join

join in carrying out, and which might be completed without our co-operation, with no disadvantage to them beyond the absence of one Colony from the system of inter-communication so established, while the injury to us would be to the extent of our exclusion from the whole group. It thus appears to your Committee, that the connecting of Sydney with Melbourne by means of the Electric Telegraph is no longer a speculative question of expediency, but one of practical bearing and immediate necessity, which calls for active measures, to preserve the position of this Colony in its various relations with the other Australian provinces.

From a statement under the hand of Mr. McGowan, the Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs in Victoria, it appears that the line from Melbourne to Sandhurst will cost £73 per mile; and the line from Geelong to Ballarat, £82 per mile; in both cases, exclusive of instruments and the erection of stations. The cost of the projected line from the western boundary of Victoria to Adelaide—a distance of 325 miles—is estimated by Mr. Todd, the Superintendent of the Magnetic Telegraph in South Australia, at £20,500, exclusive of the expense of stations. From the evidence taken on this point, your Committee have been led to the conclusion, that the cost of constructing a line of Telegraph from Sydney to Albury, in the manner most adapted to the character of the country, including instruments, and the erection of stations, would not exceed £100 per mile; and they are inclined to the opinion, that contracts might be entered into at a lower figure. Sufficient material for the completion of the line, and persons of the necessary experience and competency to take charge of it when completed, might be obtained in the adjacent Colony, without delay or difficulty.

From a calculation made by Mr. McGowan, as to the profitable working of the Line, it is estimated that the business between Sydney and Melbourne, with the intermediate stations, would be sufficient to raise a revenue in excess of the current expenses by 12 per cent. on the original outlay of capital, still leaving a surplus fund; but the extended intercourse with the remoter Colonies of Tasmania and South Australia would, of necessity, greatly increase the receipts. Upon the whole, your Committee are of opinion that this may fairly be classed among the future reproductive works of the Colony.

In Victoria the instrument adopted is that known as Morse's Recording Telegraph, but your Committee, from the evidence before them, feel warranted in expressing their opinion in favour of Henley's Patent Magneto-Electric instrument, as being of higher scientific construction, and capable of greater accuracy. The use of different instruments would cause a break in the communication at Albury; or, in other words, would necessarily render the Line, on either side, independent in itself. If Professor Morse's Telegraph were used at each end, however, it is believed that a break would still be unavoidable, on account of the inefficiency of any Battery to carry a message the whole distance. With the exception of the junction at Albury, it is not likely that any inconvenience could arise hereafter from the use of a different class of instruments in this Colony; if superior advantages were offered by their employment, as our system would be complete in itself, till extended northward, where the Authorities of New South Wales would be sure to be the first parties to move. In that direction, at no very distant date, we shall probably communicate by the Electric wire with the Indian Empire and with Europe.

After mature deliberation, your Committee are prepared to make the following specific recommendations:—

- (1.) That immediate steps be taken, in concert with the Government of Victoria, to connect the Cities of Sydney and Melbourne by Electric Telegraph.
- (2.) That a sum not exceeding £38,000 be placed on the Estimates for 1857, for that purpose.

Your Committee, in conclusion, would recommend that at an early period the town of Bathurst, as the industrial and commercial centre of an important and rising District, should be connected with the metropolis by Electric Telegraph. The desirability of thus rendering the Western District accessible by Electric communication appears second only to the Great Southern Line already recommended.

HENRY PARKES,

Chairman.

Legislative Assembly Chamber,

18 December, 1856.