

telephones and telegraphs, but I think the Railway Commission has at present sufficient power to cope with the difficulties we are experiencing as to the cost of these services. A question which, in my judgment, is more urgent, is the question of cheap cable rates. On this matter I wish to quote from one of the world leaders of public opinion on this question, Mr. Henniker Heaton, for twenty-five years a member of the British House of Commons, and recently created a baronet on account of his great services to the postal system of Great Britain and the colonies, and also in connection with cheap telegrams. In a speech delivered twenty years ago, Sir Henniker Heaton said:

Cheap cabling is the key to all the really momentous problems that confront our statesmen and merchants. It annihilates distance, abolishes delay, bridges the ocean, laughs at the storm, creates trade, nourishes individual and racial sympathies, multiplies our strength, and enables us to mass our collective resources at the threatened point. I shall not be suspected of depreciating postal advantages. The post office is the machinery of thought. But electricity is thought itself displayed in action; the living fire that makes the massive wheels to turn. At this period of the world's history, in face of the refined and perfected strategy employed to appropriate trade, the nation which makes the best use of electric agencies, according to its special needs and circumstances, will be supreme.

At the same time Sir Henniker Heaton draws this sad picture of the condition in which the cable business of the world is still kept. He says:

Electricity has been appropriated by a long-headed 'trust' just as whisky, beer and other good things have been appropriated. The poor man knows that this subtle force pervades all nature, even to his own body, and that it was intended to be the common heritage of humanity. He hears the long roll of thunder among the hills; he shrinks from the lightning flash; he is exposed to the storm which follows. But if he would avail himself of the marvellous powers of the ubiquitous fluid to send a message of life and death, he is promptly reminded that such luxuries are not for the like of him. He may wish to tell his old father that he is one of the few saved from the wreck—let the old man wait until he can receive the good news by post.

You have, in these two extracts, the very kernel of the question before us, and it is a question which has agitated the minds of Canadian and British statesmen for years past. I might remind the Postmaster General who in virtue of his portfolio, is called upon to superintend the cable business in its present limited capacity in Canada, that the Imperial Conference last year and the Press Conference three years ago, urged on the home authorities to use their influence with the cable companies

to give the long suffering public a much needed reduction in the cost of cable messages.

The Post Office Department of Canada, for the last five years at least, and I might say during the time it was under the control of my predecessor, Sir William Mulock, on many occasions brought to the attention of the home government the necessity of co-operating with Canada in obtaining reductions in cable rates. At least, during the month of December last, we received a cable from the present Postmaster General of Great Britain, addressed to the Postmaster General of Canada, which read as follows:

For messages handed in any time up to midnight to-night (Thursday), for delivery Saturday morning, the rate for 20 words, \$1.50 and 30 cents for each additional five words or fraction of five words. Week-end letters, messages handed in up to midnight any Saturday for delivery the following Tuesday morning, the rate for 30 words is \$1.50, and 25 cents for each additional five words, or fraction of five words.

When my hon. friend brought this message to the House, I sincerely congratulated him on the success which the Post Office Department of Canada had achieved, inasmuch as I before him, and Sir William Mulock before my time, had pressed for such reductions. But, as I stated the other day, this is only the first instalment, and we must expect better treatment from the cable companies, or else there is another remedy which we must apply, that is, a state-owned cable.

My hon. friend from East Lambton (Mr. Armstrong), has given the House some facts in regard to the monopoly of the cable companies. It might perhaps be interesting for the House to know how many lines are operating in Canada. There are at present five companies doing a cable business between Great Britain, Canada, and the United States—the Anglo-American, the Direct United States, La Compagnie Francaise, the Western Union, and the Commercial Cable. The two first are British companies, the third is French, and the last two belong to the United States. The number of cables operated by the five companies is 17. Something very strange happened lately, at the very time my hon. friend received that message from the Postmaster General of Great Britain, stating that reductions would be given; that was, the falling into the American cable pool of the two remaining British companies, the Anglo-American and the Direct United States. After repeated remonstrances had been made by the Postmaster General of Canada—probably by my hon. friend and certainly by myself—that steps should be taken to obtain a reduction of rates from the cable com-