

measure became a law. The facts brought out in that debate form the basis of an interesting article contributed to the *North American Review* by the Hon Hugh H. Lusk

The telegraph lines now owned and operated by the federal government for the people of Australia have a length of fully forty eight thousand miles, while the length of the wires is considerably more than one hundred thousand miles, actually a greater mileage than that of any European country, with the exception of Russia, Germany and France. In proportion to the number of inhabitants, it is probably nearly six times as great as that of any other country in the world, with the single exception of its near neighbor New Zealand. There are upwards of three thousand telegraph stations kept open for the convenience of the population which does not exceed four millions; and the revenue derived from messages is shown to be sufficient to defray the cost of operating and maintaining the lines, as well as defraying the interest charges on the cost of construction at the annual rate of 3 per cent.

The rates enforced under the terms of the act apparently suffice to maintain the great system at its full efficiency. For town and sub-urban messages—suburban meaning a practical radius of ten miles beyond the city limits—the rate fixed is twelve cents for a message not exceeding sixteen words, which includes the address and the signature. For messages to any point within the same state from which they are sent, the charge is fixed at eighteen cents for the same number of words. For messages to any other state within the Commonwealth, the charge for a message of similar length is twenty four cents. In all cases the charge for extra words beyond the sixteen is the uniform rate of two cents a word. Delivery is made within the radius of one mile from the receiving office and for this there is no extra charge. These rates, Mr. Lusk asserts, are lower for the service rendered, and the distance traversed than the existing rates in any other country except New Zealand; but they are fully justified by the experience

of the three principal states of the Commonwealth—New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Comparing these rates with those maintained in the United States, it should be remembered that Australia as a whole is a country of the same area as the United States, and that the distances actually traversed are very much greater than those between points of telegraphic communication in America. Mr. Lusk, therefore, seems to be justified in his statement that the charge of twenty four cents for a sixteen word message in Australia is much less than one half of what is charged in America. Again, considering the great area of the five states occupying the mainland, three of which are together more than two and one half times as large as Texas, and a fourth four fifths of the size of Texas, we see that the state rate of eighteen cents for a sixteen word message is equally cheap as compared with American rates, while, as Mr. Lusk asserts, the city and suburban rate of twelve cents has no parallel in American experience.

In reply to the question, "How is it done?" the postmaster general of the Commonwealth, in the course of the parliamentary debate stated that the cheapness of the system was due to its public ownership and to the economics naturally attending the system. In the matter of cost of construction, it will be generally admitted that the credit of a whole people is better than the credit of any part of it, and that, therefore, loans required by nations with a stable government and a reasonable character for honesty can be obtained on more favorable terms than loans on private credit. Thus, the eighteen million dollars of borrowed money spent by the officers of the colonial governments of Australia on the construction of telegraph lines costs today, in interest, only a small fraction beyond 3 per cent. Furthermore, even if it be admitted that the actual cost of producing the necessary supply of electricity would be as little in private hands as it could be made in a government department, it is still claimed in Australia that the working expenses of the service, including salaries and office expenses are