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THE TRADE REVIEW

Intercolonial Journal of Commerce.

MONIREAL, FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 1869.

GOVERNMENT TELEGRAPHY.

INITED States Postmaster-General Randall, in his report, recommends that the mail and telegraph systems be united. He does not recommend the plan adopted by the English Government, but proposes that the work of telegraphing shall be done by a chartered company, to be paid a certain fixed rate for the transmission of messages for certain distances, that rate not to exceed twenty cents for each message of twenty words or less, and five cents additional for overy additional five words or less, for each and every

500 miles or fraction. yart thereof.

We have again and again urged on our Government the wisdom of uniting the postal and telegraph systems. We should much prefer, bowever, that they should follow in doing this, the example set by the Imperial Government, instead of adopting the plan now proposed by Postmaster-General Randall. The principal objections raised against Government doing the work are its inferiority to that done by private enterprise, and the possibility that Governments might be tempted to make use of private information passing over the wires. As far as regards efficience, the postal service is, in the main, more satisfactorily per-formed, and in a less costly manner than would be the case, in our opinion, were the service performed by any private company which had for its object simply the making of money. We see by experience how difficult it is to present monopolies from arising, which, growing with the growth of the country, attain a strength which generally bears down all competition; and we also know that it is very difficult t

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FRED. COLE, Secretary. FRED. COLE, Secretary.
Inspector of Agencies—T. C. Livingston, P. L. S.
9-17

induce these monopolies to see that a low tariff of rates is the most profitable to themselves. The monopoly if certain work by Government is of quite a different character. If the Government charges too much for the service, they must use their gains in such a way as shall lessen the public burdens in some other direction, or in the construction of works of public utility. The profit is made out of the people, but it is for their own benefit, or as a tax to furnish necessary revenue. The successive reductions which have been made in postage prove that our Government is willing to perform the public service at as small a cost to the public as it can without loss. Now everybody is willing to concede the great advantage of cheap postage, but we are slow to see to what an enormous extent our use of the telegraph would be increased, and how greatly we should be benefited, if messages of moderate length could be sent at a rate sufficiently low to enable all classes except the very poorest to make use of the wires. We see the difficulties that lie in the way of a very reduced rate, approximating to postal charges, under the present system of transmission; but we have little doubt that some mode will be discovered whereby messages may be sent with far greater rapidity and precision than at present.

The other objection to Government telegraphy, that men in power might use the information passing over the wires for political purposes, will be found on examination to be of no weight as far as we are concerned. No Government dare, as a Government, violate the trust in their honour and in that of their servants, reposed by the public who confided their despatches to them. No Government could stand against the indignation such violation of trust would arouse or the contempt with which it would cover them. It is also to be supposed that operators would be pledged or sworn to secreey, and that they could only break their pledge at the risk of loss of their situations.

We know that public opinion is in favour of any scheme of Government telegraphy which will secure low rates, and extension of wires over the country as fast as po-The present system does not secure these adv stages, and we trust next ression of Parliament will not close without a Bill being brought down by Constament to unite the Postal and Telegraph systems of the Dominion of Canada, on the plan adopted by the Imperial Government. There will never in the future be a more favourable time for the purchase of the lines already built; there wi'l never be a time-when Government will meet with more unanimous support in carrying through its measure.