

A Commonwealth Round-the-World Cable

SINCE 1948, when the Commonwealth Telegraphs Agreement was signed by the Governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India and Southern Rhodesia, there has been increasing co-operation among Commonwealth governments in the field of telecommunication services. Under the provisions of this Agreement each partner government was committed to acquiring the external telecommunications assets operating within its territory that embraced the then-existing old-style cables and radio circuits, with a view to "promoting and co-ordinating the efficiency and development of the telecommunication services of the British Commonwealth". For this purpose the Canadian Overseas Telecommunications Corporation (COTC) was established in 1949 by Act of Parliament. In 1950 the COTC acquired the telecommunication assets in Canada of Cable and Wireless Limited and of the Canadian Company Limited.

In 1953 COTC was authorized to enter into an agreement with the Postmaster General of the United Kingdom and the Eastern Telephone and Telegraph Company to construct, maintain and operate a coaxial, repeatered telephone-cable between the United Kingdom and Canada and the United States. The agreement was signed in November 1953, and the cable commonly known as TAT-1, with a capacity of 36 voice circuits, was placed in commission on September 25, 1956. Six and a half voice circuits were owned by the COTC-BPO for the handling of traffic between Canada and the United Kingdom. Six of these circuits were used for voice communication and the half circuit was converted to 11 telegraph circuits. By the use of special terminal equipment the circuit capacity was doubled in December 1957 to 12 voice and 22 telegraph or teletype circuits.

A Commonwealth Telecommunications Conference was held in London in May and June 1958 at which the principle of constructing a Commonwealth round-the-world cable network was suggested. Such a system would, it was estimated, require about 24,000 nautical miles of cable, would take about ten years to complete and would cost about \$275 million. The first section would consist of TAT-1 (referred to above) and a second trans-Atlantic cable, CANTAT. This cable is now under construction and will be commissioned in 1961.

Canadian support for the round-the-world network was given at the Mont Tremblant meeting of Commonwealth finance ministers in September 1957, by the Minister of Finance, Mr. Fleming, who again strongly supported the plan before the Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conference in Montreal in September 1958.

At the invitation of the Australian Government a further conference was held in Sydney, Australia, in September and October 1959, at which representatives of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada discussed the