

WEST-EAST TELEPHONE. SERVICE NOW OPEN.

Voices Across Continent.

The telephone service between Western Australia and the Eastern States, was officially opened yesterday, and the line was kept busy throughout the afternoon and night. The service was declared open at 1.20 p.m. by the Postmaster General (Mr. J. A. Lyons), who spoke from a Melbourne office, to the Premier of Western Australia (Sir James Mitchell). Sir James was seated at his office desk in Perth and was using the ordinary telephone.

This opening talk was followed by a conversation between Sir James and the Premier of Victoria (Mr. E. J. Hogan), who spoke from his Parliament House office. The Premier of South Australia (Mr. L. L. Hill) then spoke to Sir James, and the service was thrown open for public use. Every word was clearly heard by Sir James, who did not have to ask for anything to be repeated.

"Can you hear me well?" asked Mr. Lyons, during the course of his conversation. "Yes; splendidly," said Sir James. "I can hear you very clearly, too," said Mr. Lyons. The speakers had prepared official speeches to make at each other for the opening and, although these were delivered, there were also many conversational remarks as well. For instance, Mr. Lyons was able to talk of the success of the Commonwealth conversion loan and Sir James was able to congratulate him upon the result. "Please accept my congratulations upon the success of the conversion loan," said Sir James. "It has been a personal triumph for you. This will show the world that Australia will rise to her difficulties. I now hope that, with the continued development of our natural resources, wise administration, and better understanding, generally, that we shall forge our way through our present troubles."

Asking Mr. Lyons for Money.

Mr. Lyons pointed out that one of the Treasury officials was with him in the room. "He wants to know if you have any money you can lend him, Sir James," Mr. Lyons said.

"It's the other way round," said Sir James. "We want money from him. We want two millions and we want it quickly."

"I'm afraid we won't be able to send it by telephone," said Mr. Lyons.

"I'll take his word and draw on that," was Sir James's retort.

In declaring the service open for traffic,

Mr. Lyons said that it was with great pleasure that he was able to join with Sir James in the inauguration of the service, which was another milestone in the telephonic history of Australia. There was no doubt that the service would be of great value to the people of Western Australia, and also to the people of the other States. For the time being the service would be restricted to connections between Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, but it was hoped that early next week and possibly on Monday the full service to New South Wales and Queensland would be in operation. When this was accomplished subscribers in Geraldton (W.A.) would be able to talk to subscribers in Cloncurry (Queensland), this being the longest land-line telephone in the world. The linking up with the international service would be effected shortly.

After Mr. Lyons had officially declared the service open, Sir James Mitchell said:—"I am delighted to have this opportunity of speaking directly to you over 2,000 miles of space. This telephone connection will mean a great deal to Western Australia. It will reduce our isolation and further develop the Federal spirit. It will bring us into equality of communication with the Eastern States which, through shorter distances, have long enjoyed this privilege. I trust it will be the fore-runner of closer communication and better understanding. Our next aim will be the completion of a uniform gauge railway linking up all the capitals."

A Chat on the Weather.

The Premier of Victoria (Mr. E. J. Hogan) was in the Legislative Assembly when he was summoned to the telephone. After the conversation with Mr. Lyons had concluded, persons who were listening to the opening ceremony heard an Eastern States voice ask, "Is that Western Australia?"

"Yes," said Sir James, "this is the Premier speaking."

"Mr. Hogan has just gone into the House, Sir James, but we will have him here in a moment. Would you mind holding the line?" came the voice from Melbourne.

Sir James held on. The voice asked about the weather. "It's a fine day," said Sir James, "such as we always have at this time of year in Perth." "Yes; you have a steadier climate than we do, don't you," said the voice. Sir James agreed. Mr. Lyons joined in at this juncture. "I must come over your way, one of these days," he said.

"We would be delighted," Sir James replied.

Breaking Down Isolation.

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Then Mr. Hogan was heard. Greetings were exchanged and Sir James Mitchell said:—"I am delighted to have this opportunity of speaking directly to you. I trust that this is merely the fore-runner of many useful interchanges of ideas upon problems in which we are mutually interested. I am sure this telephone connection will mean the breaking down of isolation, more facility in exchange of opinion, better understandings, and consequent restoration of confidence."

He spoke in a similar vein to the Premier of South Australia (Mr. L. L. Hill) and added that, at the end of the month, 240 Young Australia League boys would be visiting that State. Mr. Hill said that he would make it his personal duty to see that they were shown everything of importance and that their stay was made as interesting as possible.

Lord Mayors Converse.

The service was then open to the public and the first call was from the Lord Mayor of Adelaide (Mr. C. J. Glover), who spoke to the Lord Mayor of Perth (Sir William Lathlain). Sir William was at the office of Messrs. Laubman and Pank, in Barrack-street. Both referred to the possibilities of the service and to the clearness of the transmission. Messrs. Laubman and Pank then had the first outward call to their Adelaide office. The first commercial call from Melbourne was from W. Braithwaite, Pty., Ltd., tanners, of Preston, to Basnett, Garland and Co., leather merchants, of Perth, and to Brown and Dureau, Ltd., of Murray-street, Perth.

Owing to the long distance covered and the strangeness of the service to the operators, there were delays in the service later in the day, but it is hoped that these troubles will be eliminated to-day. Up to midnight, 30 calls had been handled between Perth and city and suburban subscribers in Adelaide and Melbourne.