

EAST AFR. PROT

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REC'D
19 AUG 1914Governor
Belfield 697

1914

24th July

Last previous Paper.

M. 9
19257MAGADI SCHEME
WIRELESS TELEGRAPHYTrs memo. by P.M.G. recommending application
be not granted. Concurs for reasons stated.Mr. Johnson.

If the C^o, with refer^{ce} to
previous corresp^{ce}, that we have
now received a report from the firm
from which it appears to be doubtful
whether the scheme is feasible - that
the matter has been discussed between
the Postmaster Gen^l & the Public &
Mr. Symonds & that arrang^{ts} could
be made for efficient alternative
commⁿ via Nairobi for considerably
less expnd - but that in any case
the Post^l will be unwilling to grant
a license until experience has
shown

To the Magadi Co - 26 Aug 14
copy above Gov. 7187 - 25 Aug 14 7.

Next subsequent Paper.

show to what extent the numbers
metall: will be used for official
purposes - + copy of our 1st to
the pres: for info: D. St. 2

L. V. R.

2/27/14

also see 9/21/13/14

C. O.
31374

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EAST AFRICA PROTECTORATE.

No. 697

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
NAIROBI, 20 AUG 14
BRITISH EAST AFRICA.

July 24th 1914.

M. J.
76469

Sir,

With reference to your despatch No. 523 of May 29th on the subject of an application by the Magadi Soda Company for permission to erect a wireless telegraph station at their works, I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of a memorandum by the Postmaster General, with whose views I am entirely in accord, in which he puts forward a strong recommendation that the licence should not be granted.

Memorandum
14. 7. 14.

2. I am disinclined, at the commencement of our experiments with wireless telegraphy, to accept on behalf of Government any obligation to handle private work particularly as it is clear that the Company can arrange, if it chooses, for efficient alternative communication via Nairobi.

3. I am of opinion that we should not commit ourselves to any such arrangement until experience has

The Right Honourable
Lewis Harcourt, P.C., M.P.,
Secretary of State for the Colonies,
Downing Street,
LONDON, S. W.

has shown the extent to which the Mombasa installation
will be utilised for official communications.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your humble, obedient servant,

Alway Beyid.

GOVERNOR.

C. O.
31374

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INCLOSURE

In Despatch No. 297 of 1914

1914/14.

P. M. G's Office, Nairobi,

14th July, 1914

The Honourable

The Acting Chief Secretary

to the Government,

Nairobi.

MAGADI BODA COMPANY - APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION
TO ERECT A WIRELESS TELEGRAPH STATION
AT THEIR WORKS

Ref. Your No. 5849 of 25-6-14 and 5-7-1914.

-----00000-----

I beg to report that, in my opinion, the proposed Wireless Scheme of the Magadi Company is neither practicable nor necessary, and that, in any case, the circumstances do not warrant the granting of a license for any such installation.

2. In the first place, the Mombasa Wireless Station has only a guaranteed range of 200 nautical miles over "mountainous country rising to 3,000 feet", (vide page 18 of the printed contract with the Masekei Company) whilst the distance from Magadi Lava to Mombasa would appear to be fully 250 nautical miles. Moreover the intervening country rises to some 5,000 feet above sea level which presumably would

reduce

2.

reduce the range of working to less than 200 miles.

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3. In the second place there is no necessity for the Magadi Company to incur the heavy expenditure which a wireless Station would involve. The Wireless Station when erected and complete with buildings will have cost at least £2,500, and even assuming that the Magadi Company is able (as the Manager informs me) to do things cheaper than Government a wireless Station at Magadi suited to the purpose mentioned cannot very well cost less than a £2,000. A through telegraph line from their works at Lake Magadi to Nairobi could be provided for one-third of that amount and the expense of working and up-keep would be correspondingly less. But a complete ^{additional} land line is unnecessary as there are already three telegraph wires between Lake Magadi and Magadi Junction of which two only will be required by the Railway. The third line which would ordinarily be used by the Post Office could be placed at the disposal of the Company if, as seems probable, no arrangement is entered into for a Post Office telegraph connection with Magadi.



4. I have no doubt that the Company's telegrams have been mutilated, especially cable messages in code exchanged with England. When the construction of the Magadi Railway was first commenced I pointed out to Messrs. Pauling's Engineer (Mr. Hiches) that the only means of telegraph communication to and from Magadi Junction was over the Uganda Railway Telegraphs, and that neither the staff nor the arrangements of the Railway telegraph system were suitable for dealing expeditiously and correctly with commercial telegrams written in code. I offered to provide a Post and Telegraph Office on guaranteed terms which offer Mr. Hiches first accepted tentatively and subsequently declined. When, a few months since, I first

met Mr. Symonds, the local Manager of the Magadi Company, I mentioned the matter to him stating what had happened in respect of my negotiations with Mr. Stokes. He did nothing at the time but quite recently the question of postal and telegraph communication had again been discussed. Mr. Symonds is of opinion that, in any case, it will be necessary for his Company to be in telephone communication with Nairobi and he proposes to dictate telegrams over the telephone from his Office at Magadi to the Nairobi Post Office. A similar arrangement which has been working for some time past between his Company's Offices at Kilindini and the Mombasa Post Office and his experience is that this is quite satisfactory. He pointed out to me that if the telephone failed they always had a second line of communication in the Railway Telegraphs which would extend as far as Magadi Lake. He seemed to think that, with the telephone, any provision for a Postal Telegraph Office at Magadi on the lines contemplated in my No. 1026/15 of the 20th of April 1914 (your Office file 4401 and Colonial Office despatch 236 of the 18th of March 1914) would be quite unnecessary.

5. It has been pointed out to Mr. Symonds that as regards communication between his Company's local Headquarters at Mile 26 on the Magadi Railway and the works at Magadi Lake extra wires could be erected on the existing line of poles, along the Magadi Railway, at a comparatively small cost. Even this cost could be avoided if, as seems probable, one of the three wires already existing can be placed at his Company's disposal. His only complaint in this connection seems to be that he would prefer telephone communication to a private telegraph wire. I am afraid, however, that the induction from the phonograph instruments used in connection with train signalling would make the use of telephones impossible on the section of line referred to.

6. Even if Wireless communication between Mombasa and Mogadi were possible, with the plant already ordered, I could not recommend that the Mombasa Wireless Station should be so utilized as I am of opinion that its capacity will be absorbed, almost from the outset, in other ways. The Wireless traffic with ships will not amount to very much, but our telegraph traffic with Zanzibar and German East Africa may be very considerable. The business with these two places represents a large proportion of our total telegraph work with countries abroad and unless the Cable Company makes a very substantial reduction in its rates, in the face of Wireless competition, the Mombasa Station will generally be busy exchanging messages with the wireless Stations at Pemba, Zanzibar and Darassalam. There will, in addition, be the traffic with Jubaland through the Italian Stations to the North, and I very much doubt whether the Mombasa Station will have any time to attend to private Wireless installations.

7. If the Mogadi Company were so circumstanced that the provision of Wireless Communication were a vital necessity for the carrying on of its business then a licence, and some facilities for the exchange of messages, could hardly be refused, but it will be understood from the foregoing that such is very far from being the case. In view of other facilities, either existing or easily obtainable, its Wireless ~~is~~ installation could only be an unnecessary and very expensive luxury; moreover Government could hardly be expected to concede special rates for telegrams sent by Wireless Telegraphy from Mogadi and not from necessity, and the rate in England for telegrams transmitted over similar distances is 5 d. per word for the Government Wireless Station plus the ordinary inland or

cable charges. This applied locally would mean that the Company would have to pay 7 d. per word for plain language telegrams forwarded by wireless as against 1 d. per word for the same messages forwarded by wire.

8. I may say that previous to hearing of the Imperial Company's proposals I was approached by another firm regarding this question of privately owned Wireless Installations, and I have no doubt that if this application were granted such requests would be multiplied. From the point of view of the public there is a certain attraction in having one's own Wireless Station and being able to communicate direct from one's Office with different Stations of the Government System. There is no doubt, however, that this would impair the general efficiency of the Wireless Telegraph Service and be opposed to the interests of the general public. In certain countries, e.g., in the United States, and I am afraid also in England, licences for privately owned Wireless Stations have been issued far too freely. Such Stations unless very strictly controlled may become a source of public danger as witness the interference of the American Stations on the occasion of the sinking of the u.s. "Titanic".

9. In East Africa wireless telegraphy is only just being introduced. The general local circumstances and conditions are such that this form of communication may become very important in future, and we are already considering its use for the Northern Frontier and for small outlying places elsewhere. We do not know the extent to which we may want to utilise it and I would strongly recommend that, for the present at least, the policy should be one of refusing to issue any licences whatsoever for private installations. To licence even one station is to create a precedent for others and I am convinced that any such action at the present time would be premature. Wireless Stations do interfere with the working of each other, all laws regulations

B.

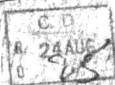
and instructions notwithstanding, and an installation of sufficient power to work from Mogaadi to Mombasa might very well hamper the development of wireless telegraphs in the public interest.

(Sd.) J. GOSLING.

POSTMASTER GENERAL,
East Africa & Uganda Protectorates.

Victd. to R.M./D.

Gov. 31374/1914 E.A.P.



copy

[Handwritten mark]

The Managers

25 August 1914

The Nagadi Soda
Co., Limited

~~Sir~~
Gentlemen,

[M. 19357]

With reference to the letter from
this Office of the 2nd of June
and previous correspondence
I am directed etc to inform

you that a report has
been received from the Gov.
of the E.A.P. from which
it appears to be doubtful
whether the proposed
scheme for the erection of
installation of wireless
telegraph communication
with the Nagadi works
is feasible.

2 The Gov. states
that

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copy Gov 789 25 Aug. 14 '14

that the matter has been
discussed by the Admirals
Genl. of the Post & Mr. Symonds
& that arrangements could
be made for efficient ultra-
communication via Nairobi
for considerably less expense,
but that, in any case, the
Govt. would be unwilling to
consider the grant of a
licence until experience
has shown to what extent
the Mombasa installation
will be used for official
purposes

(Signed) H. J. READ.

for the Under Secretary of State

at once
H. J. G. 27/8/14

Shell House,

25/27 Bishopsgate, E. C.

Read
7. Attach
Aut.
27.8.14

31374/1914.

26th August, 1914.



The Under Secretary of State,
COLONIAL OFFICE.

Sir,

We have to acknowledge your favour of the 25th August in which you inform us that you have received a report from the Governor of the East Africa Protectorate from which it appears to be doubtful whether the proposed scheme for the installation of wireless telegraphic communication with the Magadi Works is feasible.

We are glad to note that the question has been discussed by the Postmaster-General of the Protectorate and Mr Symonds and that arrangements can be made for efficient alternative communication via Nairobi for considerably less expense.

For the present, however, we understand that the Government will be unwilling to grant a licence until the extent to which the Mombasa installation will be used for official purposes is known by experience.

We are obliged for the above communication,
& have the honour to be,

Yours obediently,

THE MAGADI SODA COMPANY, LTD.

W. S. ...
MANAGER