Notes of a meeting held in Mr. Lovell's room, Central Office of Information, on 27th March, 1947 to consider the relative merits of Hellschreiber and Teletype working as far as the London Press Service is concerned.

**Present:**

- Mr. Lovell (Chairman)
- Mr. Hughes
- Mr. Cook
- Mr. Easterbrook
- Mr. Penman
- Mr. Rennie
- Mr. Jowers
- Mr. Whitley
- Mr. Campbell
- Mr. McLoughlin (Central Office of Information)

**Reason for Meeting:**

Mr. Lovell indicated that the merits of Hellschreiber and Teletype working were considered at a recent meeting but owing to conflicting evidence, agreement could not be reached as to which was the better system for the immediate purposes of extension of automatic transmission for the London Press Service. He hoped the points about to be raised would be carefully considered and, if possible, a unanimous recommendation made.

It was generally agreed that the preparations for the change to Hellschreiber working in Europe and the Middle East should be continued.

**Hell in Europe and Middle East**

**Hell versus Teletype**

Mr. Cook would not say that Hell was obsolete; the point being that teleprinter operation gave a better typed material which, in many cases, permitted more efficient staffing on the editorial and distributive sections of the Press. Teleprinter operation used in conjunction with twin diversity frequency shift demanded more elaborate equipment than Hell and a high standard of teleprinter maintenance. Whether the conditions for adequate teleprinter maintenance were available at specific Posts was not for him to say. Although teletype had certain ancillary advantages, the transmissions sometimes reached a degree of error when wrong letters were produced. Hell, on the other hand, might give blurred letters, but so long as they were readable they were correct. Should it be decided to introduce teletype the Post Office would require three or four months notice to make the necessary arrangements.

**Speed of Teletype and Hell**

Mr. Rennie and Mr. Cook compared the speed of Hellschreiber with standard American or British teletype and agreed that teletype was a little faster, but between the two there was no substantial difference. In highly developed areas teletype would prove more satisfactory than Hell on account of the easy availability of routine maintenance and the expected mechanical ability of the operator. In less developed areas easy maintenance service and high mechanical skill could not be obtained. Whilst teletype could be introduced with advantage into New York, for instance, it was not thought that either the service or qualified operators could be obtained in more than one of the eight Carribean Colonies.
Mr. Rennie pointed out that teletype could produce a number of legible copies at once which could be used for immediate service or relay. It was remarked however that, whilst that would be highly advantageous for large posts the smaller Posts would be concerned with first editing and then distributing the material to upwards of twenty recipients. It was agreed that in most Posts use of Hell would involve an additional typing operation. Editing and typing would be necessary under either system. Mr. Cook asked whether the editing was done from the Hell tape, but Mr. Rennie and Mr. Jowers, who appreciated the difficulties, stated that editors in the Posts abroad would not normally work from the Hell tape.

To the question "Does teletype require special qualifications?" Mr. Easterbrook replied "Yes, a skilled mechanic must be available at each Post."

Mr. Jowers and Mr. Cook compared their experience of Hell, working and expressed surprise at the lack of complaints about sets which worked for 16 to 18 months with only minor replacements and practically no adjustments. Mr. Cook added that Hell would tolerate a large amount of distortion without making the material unusable whereas the reports on the first four months teletype operating between this country and India were depressing owing to inadequate service. Some improvement had however been achieved since the first four months.

A table was furnished by Mr. McLoughlin indicating that on transfer to Hell or teletype working in South America, provided the workage remained the same, the use of transmitter time would be halved resulting in a saving of £6,500 in the first year and £13,000 in two years. Since also operators would be required for only half the time there might be a considerable saving in that respect. Furthermore any Hell sets which might be used in South America would still have some value in the L.P.S. organisation on being superseded by teletype.

Mr. Campbell said we were under obligation to reduce costs and we could only do that by reducing our transmission time. The sooner we extended speedy working throughout the world the sooner we could start saving money and time both here and abroad.

Mr. Campbell enquired whether the introduction of teletype working to the Americas at a time when we were operating by Hell, to some parts of the world and by morse to other parts would not mean additional use of transmitters which would further increase our costs. The Post Office representatives said they could not give an answer immediately.

Mr. Whitley asked the cost of installing teletype and, on being informed by Mr. Easterbrook that it would be £350, including adaptor, plus maintenance costs, said no Carribean Colony would pay that amount. He asked for further information concerning supply which is found to be as follows:-

No adaptors are made in this country; but the Marconi Company are prepared to manufacture an adaptor provided the R.C.A. in America also make a suitable one which can be used as a prototype. It is known that the R.C.A. make adaptors but enquiry is being made and a reply by telegram is awaited as to whether they are either suitable or available.
Supply of Hells.

Mr. Easterbrook said the delivery of Hell sets would probably commence towards the end of the year and, if a supplementary order were placed, the cost per set should not be greatly increased. He indicated that the Contracts Branch of the Post Office had done its best: that Messrs. Klaxon Ltd., the makers of the motor, were delaying delivery and that a visit to them or representations to the Coventry Gauge and Tool Company the main contractors who were making the remainder of the printer, might accelerate delivery.

It was in the circumstances not found possible to reach a unanimous decision at the meeting but a large measure of support was obtained for the introduction of teletype operating into North America, provided the Posts were prepared to receive it, and Hell into South America as an interim measure.

No firm date could be given about the delivery date of teletype, but Mr. Rennie indicated that the instruments could be bought in America and that New York might be interested in the London Press Service.

It was indicated that, if an additional order to stock the South America Posts were decided, on the cost of four Hell sets would fall on the Foreign Office (the remaining 9 Posts being stocked from the European surplus) and the cost of eight on the Caribbean Colonies. In this regard Mr. Whitley said he would need time to obtain information, consider the result and, if necessary, approach the Treasury for support.

It was agreed that the additional information required from the Foreign Office and the Post Office should be centred in Mr. McLoughlin who would keep the Colonial Office informed; and that all the Departments concerned would be given notification of any further meetings on the subject.

M. McLoughlin