

has invited the Government to seek Her Majesty's Government to remove the veil of secrecy and let us see behind the scenes, let us learn why it is that in view of this great work, so vitally important to us and to Australia, equally important to Her Majesty's Government and to the Empire itself, as recent events have strikingly evidenced—why it is that this matter should be apparently in abeyance. Now, Sir, I hold in my hand a paper to which I would like very well to have drawn the attention of the First Minister, who, I am sorry to see, is not in his seat to-night; it contains a statement made apparently with a good deal of authority, and which throws a good deal of responsibility in regard to the present position of this important question, upon that right hon. gentleman. I hold in my hand a copy of the London "Standard," of the 26th of July, 1897. I may say for the information of some members of the House who may not be aware of the fact, that the London "Standard" is practically the organ of Her Majesty's Government. I do not know a paper published in London that is looked to with the same confidence as the London "Standard" to ascertain the views and sentiments of Her Majesty's Government. This paper professes to give, on what purports to be the best authority, the report of an interview between Mr. Chamberlain and the Colonial Premiers. We have had since that a portion of the details laid by that right hon. gentleman himself upon the Table of the House, but this inside view of the interview gives us some information above and beyond anything that is to be found in the statements laid upon the Table of the House of Commons. I may say that from the very moment that this question of a Pacific Cable was mooted, it met with the most untiring hostility of the Eastern Extension Cable Company of which Sir John Pender, a very able man, was the founder, a man of consummate ability, and whose arms were long and far reaching. I say from the outset this Pacific Cable project met with the determined hostility of the Eastern Extension Cable Company for the obvious reasons that they had practically a monopoly of communication with the great islands of Australasia, and disliked any competition from another and superior line of communication, and one more free from interruption than the line that now exists. Well, it appears that in their untiring efforts to defeat this scheme, they brought forward and placed before the cable commission in London, an alternative scheme. I will now read a report of what professes to be a result of the conference between Mr. Chamberlain and the Colonial Premiers:

The conference left the Pacific Cable scheme in mid-air, and it is very unlikely that anything more will be heard of it for a considerable time. The position was entirely changed by a proposal by the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company to lay an all-British line from Western Australia,

Sir CHARLES TUPPER.

across the Indian Ocean to Mauritius, thence connecting with the Cape and St. Helena and Ascension. Under any circumstances, Western Australia and South Australia were opposed to the Pacific Cable.—

For the reasons I have mentioned.

—which would divert traffic from their land lines, and Victoria was indifferent. New South Wales, Queensland and New Zealand were, by reason of their geographical position, prepared to subsidize the Pacific line, and if the Home and Canadian Governments had been willing to pay their share, no doubt the scheme would have been carried out. But the conference soon discovered that the Imperial Treasury was very unwilling indeed to subsidize the line, while Sir Wilfrid Laurier indicated that he mistrusted the estimates of cost, revenue and maintenance which had been submitted by the projector, and was not prepared to pledge Canada to bear a share of the burden.

Now, Sir, I regret that the right hon. gentleman is not here to give to this House some explanation of the grounds upon which he should have questioned the conclusion of the projector, for that could be no other than Sir Sandford Fleming, as he was the party who had put forward all the data upon which this question was dealt with. I would like to know why he should throw doubt and discredit upon Sir Sandford Fleming's calculations of the cost, when they had been subjected to so severe and important a test as that of being submitted to competition between the great cable companies, and it had been found that instead of those calculations being unworthy of confidence, he had erred upon the safe side of largely over-estimating the cost beyond what it was found an important cable firm in London were prepared to construct the work. If that be a correct statement, I regret very much that such doubts should have been expressed, or that any hesitation should have been expressed by Canada in regard to a matter that I look upon as very important, not only to Canada and Australia, but perhaps still more important to the Empire itself.

If Her Majesty's Government show a disposition, as here stated, to recede from the position of being prepared to bear a large and substantial portion of the risk, regarded as a very light one by the representative of the Imperial Government, Mr. Chamberlain, a very great change must have taken place in that right hon. gentleman's opinion from the time I had the pleasure of discussing that subject with him in connection with the delegates from all the colonies. I do not intend at this hour to occupy further time than to say that this is a question deserving the hearty support of the Government and Parliament of Canada. I believe it is all but demonstrated that it is of great importance to us, that it would make Canada the great highway and thoroughfare for a very large amount of the cable communication between the great island conti-