

named the Alert was offered, but was not accepted. Finally, Canada proposed to pay half the expenses of the survey, but even this offer was refused by the Liberal Government then in power.

In 1887 the First Colonial Conference was held in London. In the previous year the Canadian Pacific Railway had been completed, and in a letter to her Majesty's Government the High Commissioner for Canada reopened the question of telegraphic communication to Australia by that route. It was doubtless this letter which induced the Colonial Secretary, the Right Hon. H. E. Stanhope, in the invitation to the Conference, which he addressed to the different Colonies, to mention improved telegraphic communication as one of the leading subjects for discussion.

In his statement to the Conference Mr Sandford Fleming, who was present as one of the Canadian delegates, gave his reasons for the importance of a Pacific cable, and combated the adverse criticism of the late Sir (then Mr) John Pender, who represented the companies owning the existing telegraph routes to Australasia. Mr Sandford Fleming pointed out that the coral-reefs, which Mr Pender represented as forming such a difficulty, lay in well-defined groups, which could easily be avoided. The ocean expanses between them contained wide and uniform depressions very suitable for a cable. Finally, the existing tariff of 9s. 4d. per word to Australia, instead of 3s. 3d. by the proposed Pacific route, was alone sufficient reason for breaking up the cable monopoly to the East, even if the alternative route were not pronounced to be a necessity from an imperial point of view.

Although the Postmaster-Gen-

eral acknowledged that it was impossible to recognise the monopoly which Mr Pender claimed, he declared that her Majesty's Government could not, by laying a Pacific cable, become a competitor with existing commercial enterprise. In consequence of this statement, the colonial delegates, realising that their Governments could not carry through the project unassisted by Great Britain, and relieved by Mr Pender's offer to substantially reduce the tariff on receiving a guarantee against half the loss incurred by the reduction, did not commit themselves to any more definite resolution than the following: "That the connection of Canada with Australasia by direct submarine telegraph across the Pacific is a project of high importance to the empire, and every doubt as to its practicability should without delay be set at rest by a thorough and exhaustive survey."

A result of this resolution was a letter signed by all the delegates and addressed to Sir Henry Holland (afterwards Lord Knutsford), who succeeded Mr Stanhope as Secretary of State for the Colonies, respectfully requesting that her Majesty's Government would cause the survey to be made. The Secretary replied to the effect that unless there was a prospect of the cable being laid, the Admiralty did not recommend despatching a vessel solely for the purpose. Correspondence was still kept up during the rest of the year by Mr Sandford Fleming on the subject, but nothing came of it. At the Postal Conference, however, held at Sydney in March 1888, the Governor of Victoria, in accordance with a resolution passed at it, telegraphed to Lord Knutsford, asking that the Admiralty should be moved to make an early survey for the Pacific cable, the cost of