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## ADDRESS OF MR. SANDFORD FLEMING.

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MR. PRESIDENT—You have been good enough to invite me to address the Chamber of Commerce of Melbourne on the subject of an alternative submarine telegraph between Australia and England. It is therefore with no little satisfaction that I submit the following brief remarks for your consideration.

It is scarcely necessary to say that a direct line of telegraph across the Pacific, to connect these Colonies with England by way of Canada, has long been advocated as a work designed to be of great commercial value, and, moreover, as I believe, destined to be of the highest national importance to the Empire as a whole.

It is not unknown to members of this Chamber that at the Colonial Conference held in London six years ago the matter was discussed at considerable length, and that at various times since then the establishment of a Pacific cable has been warmly advocated on both sides of the ocean. The time is evidently now ripe for something more than mere advocacy. As far as I am able to judge, we have reached a stage when some practical step should be taken to unite Australia and Canada telegraphically, and I feel satisfied that this Chamber of Commerce, representing the intelligence and business activity of Melbourne, one of the greatest, if not the greatest, commercial centres in the southern hemisphere, can materially advance an undertaking so much to be desired.

The members of this body are no doubt perfectly familiar with all the circumstances connected with the laying of a cable to New Caledonia from the Australian Continent, assisted by the Governments of Queensland and New South Wales. I have no doubt that these Governments had excellent reasons for granting assistance at the time it was offered; and, in their anxiety to have telegraphic connection with North America, the possibility of this short cable forming a link in the main line had perhaps some weight; but, apart altogether from the Pacific cable, they considered that there were strong local reasons for having a telegraph to New Caledonia. If, however, it was ever thought that the New Caledonia cable might form a section of the Pacific cable, I believe I am warranted in saying that that idea has been entirely dispelled; and it has been dispelled mainly, I believe, by the