

first to take up this scheme of Imperial telegraphic communication. The government of Canada was the first to bring it to what may be called a practical stage, by assisting the governments of the Australasian colonies in pressing the matter upon the Imperial government.

In the second place, it is a matter which concerns the whole commonwealth of the British nations—not merely the British islands, nor merely any one colony. And, Sir, it cannot be denied, that in fact, although not in form, the commonwealth of British nations has become a unity to-day. It is a united commonwealth. We have had discussions for many years as to how this commonwealth of nations could be united, whether by confederation, or representation in the House of Lords—whether by this scheme or that—but now spontaneously that union has become a fact. There is no constitution yet for this great commonwealth, except that which has been written on the sands of Africa in the blood of brave men—men of all the colonies, men of the empire—but the fact remains that the British nations are to-day one great unity. Any one member of that unity has a right to speak on any matter concerning the interests of the whole body, and above all, Canada, the leading member of that unity, has a right to speak on a matter of this kind. I think we have proven, not only our right to interfere in matters of this kind, but our sense and judgment and foresight in connection with such matters. Let the establishment of Imperial penny postage itself speak on that point. Surely if ever there was an Imperial measure, drawing its principal support and assistance from Canada, that is one. It has been accepted enthusiastically by the greater part of the empire, and recognized as a complete success. Let us then come forward boldly and firmly and strongly, and impress upon the Imperial government that this thing ought to be done, and that the crisis now puts the responsibility upon their shoulders. If the Imperial government had been as anxious to see this great Imperial scheme carried out, as we are, that cable would have been laid and carrying messages to-day. It has been delayed and postponed from time to time, and given the cold shoulder, for reasons into which this is perhaps not the occasion to inquire and which perhaps we would be unable to get at. At all events the Imperial government has been slow to move when the colonies have been ready. Now is the time for the Imperial government to take action, which will prevent the establishment of a fatal competition with the Imperial scheme of cables between the different colonies, for if these cables are now established, without such an expropriation clause as has been suggested, the chances for the Pacific cable of the empire will be very poor indeed. I must say that the government have been

active and urgent in the past, and have accomplished a great deal. They have kept the matter before the British government, and the discussions of this House have had their effect, and are having their effect in Australia, as we see by the extracts which were read to us by the hon. member for Ottawa (Mr. Belcourt). The idea of an expropriation clause has been accepted there, and is pressed on the Eastern Extension Company. With all this to encourage us, I hope to hear from the government that some active steps have been taken to carry out the views which I think are unanimously those of this House, on the subject.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER (Cape Breton). I unfortunately was not present, Mr. Speaker, when this subject was brought to the notice of the House, and perhaps it would be more convenient for the Postmaster General (Mr. Mulock), if I were to make a few observations before the government say anything on the subject. The subject was put very clearly and succinctly before the House by my hon. friend the Postmaster General, when he brought up for the action of this House this important question of the Pacific cable, and I think we all agree that not only commercially, but from a strategic point of view, the construction of the Pacific cable from Vancouver or Victoria to Australia, is a matter of deep moment. It is impossible, in my judgment, to overrate its importance to Australia. It is also commercially and in every other way, a matter of great importance to Canada, and of still greater importance to the United Kingdom. It is quite possible that, under the existing condition of things, the whole position of Australia may be imperilled. It is known that the Eastern Extension Company's lines are liable to be interrupted, and that communication between London, the heart of the empire, and Australia could be easily cut off, and a long period elapse before any intercommunication could take place. In the case of war between a European power and England, the communication with Australia could be easily cut off, and a great deal of damage done by the enemy, before it became known. Canada is not so directly interested, but Canada is a component part of the empire, and as such deeply interested in everything that tends to a closer commercial intercommunication between the various parts of the empire. Anything that will make Canada the highway of communication between Australia and Great Britain, anything that would help the section of the empire exposed to very serious assault and damage, cannot be too seriously considered. After the discussions that have taken place in this House on this question, it does not require a word to enhance the great importance to England, Australia and Canada, of cable intercommunication. Everything that Canada could be asked to do, she has done, and it would