

These resolutions read as follows:--

1st. "That the connection recently formed through Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific by railway and telegraph opens a new alternative line of Imperial communication over the high seas, and through British possessions, which promises to be of great value alike in naval, military, commercial, and political aspects."

2nd. "That the connection of Canada with Australia 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."

The explanations and discussions of which these resolutions were the outcome, set forth in ample detail that the true way to permanently reduce the charges in telegraphy between Great Britain and Australia is to utilise the Canadian route, and establish a new cable across the Pacific from the western coast of the Dominion. It was likewise shown that by this alternative route the electric cable would be laid in deep water, and the telegraph would pass through countries under the British flag, and in consequence would in every respect be safer from injury than the existing line, and more permanently serviceable in peace or war.

The representations of the Conference were considered of so much importance that the Admiralty commenced a survey of the new route, and up to the present time has, as far as I am aware, discovered no difficulties in the way. Possession has also been taken by Great Britain of a number of islands in the Pacific, for the purpose of establishing mid-ocean stations.

Recognising that negotiations were necessary in order to reach a common understanding, the Government of Canada two years ago invited the Governments of Australia and New Zealand to send delegates to Canada to consider the whole question of telegraphic and trade relations, and arrange terms. Correspondence resulted, involving delay, and it was finally agreed that delegates should be sent from Canada to Australia. Accordingly, the Canadian Government appointed delegates last year, but the proposed federation of the Australian Colonies postponed their visit under the conviction that more effective action would be attainable after federation became accomplished. The unfortunate delay proceeds from causes, some of which exhibit the extreme desirability of having closer connection by a direct cable across the Pacific. I believe I am correct in stating that the Canadian Government only awaits the proper moment again to commission delegates to proceed on the same mission.

Under these circumstances it certainly would be a retrograde step to adopt the proposal of the Eastern and Eastern Extension Telegraph Companies. Its adoption would practically put an end to any prospect of connecting Canada and Australia telegraphically for ten years to come, possibly for a much longer period. Admitting all that can be said in favour of reducing telegraph charges, admitting that they cannot be reduced a moment too soon, would it be wise to prevent the establishment of an alternative line, which, to a greater extent than by any other means, would have the effect of reducing these charges? If time be an element of importance, is not the true policy to accelerate the survey undertaken by the Admiralty, and make arrangements for establishing the new line with the least possible delay? It is obvious that the acceptance of the proposal of the existing Telegraph Companies would prove a serious blow to Colonial development and commercial expansion on the waters of the Pacific. It cannot be accepted without completely ignoring the commanding position of the Dominion, and disregarding all that Canadian enterprise has done to make that position commanding. Would this be wise? Is it expedient? Are there not Imperial interests of the first magnitude involved in the question?

In 1886 Her Majesty's Government advised the Queen to summons a Conference for the discussion of questions of general importance to the whole Empire. The Colonial Minister in calling the Conference specially alluded to the development of Imperial telegraphic communications, and gave expression to the opinion that "they should be considered as a whole, in order that the needs of every part of the Empire may, as far as practicable, be provided for, and that suggestions may be obtained from all quarters as to the best means of establishing a complete system of communication without that increased expenditure which necessarily results from isolated action."

The joint deliberation of Delegates from all parts of Her Majesty's Empire, and the formal submission of their deliberate opinion under the circumstances of their appointment, and in view of the objects for which they were called together, should carry with it due weight.

The reduction of telegraph charges is most important, but there are other momentous considerations, and while it has been indisputably shown that the new line will be able to do its work at far lower rates than is possible by the old line, most important advantages of another kind can justly be claimed for it. It will secure to the mother country a second and more direct means of reaching Australia, incidentally