

On all grounds, therefore, a secure route to the East at the outset of war would confer inestimable advantages upon the Empire. It may be argued that the route can always be adopted if the need arises, and that no special preparation in peace time is required. This is only partially true. Shipping can now adapt itself to almost any new course which circumstances may require, but, for the rapid transport of men and stores, special arrangements are entailed which cannot be rapidly extemporised. An accustomed trade route, regularly used in peace time, will invariably offer inestimable advantages as a communication in war. Along it troops and stores could at once be smoothly conveyed without delays or confusion.

I therefore consider that, from the purely military point of view, any steps taken to develop the Ocean route would add greatly to the potential strength of the Empire in war.

This route once fully established would soon become self-supporting in peace time, and would lead to the certain growth of a large shipping in the Pacific, where it is now extremely limited.

The enormous gain in the event of a great war is evident.

At such a time the first necessity will be communication between the scattered members of the Empire. Thus only can its vast resources be brought into play. Thus only can its existence be assured.

I have preferred to dwell on the Military advantages of developing the Western route, and thus providing an alternative line of communication, rather than on the political and economical advantages. The latter must, however, be important and far-reaching.

Politically, the effect will be to bring the members of the Empire into closer union. Economically, the opening up of new avenues of trade will indubitably bring about a wider distribution of products and reduce the stagnation which is now heavily felt by all classes.

On all these grounds I strongly support the policy urged.

It is, for the Imperial Government, a primary duty to aid a project by which National advantages in peace time and security, as well as striking power in war, will be unquestionably attained.

AND. CLARKE

VICTORIA OFFICE,
January, 1894.