

THE PACIFIC CABLE SCHEME.

From "THE TIMES," April 19, 1894.

In view of the Colonial Conference to be held in June at Ottawa, at which the scheme for a cable between Australia and Canada is to be considered, representations have been lately made to the Colonial Office. The advocates of the undertaking urge that the British Government should unite with the Governments of Australasia and Canada in guaranteeing the interest upon the capital required for a single line of cable. The Intercolonial Conference at Wellington considered that a guarantee of four per cent. upon a capital not exceeding £1,800,000 for fourteen years would be sufficient to induce a company to undertake the construction of the line. But Mr. Sandford Fleming, the chief Canadian promoter of the scheme, thought that a joint guarantee of three per cent., representing a total charge of £52,350, would be sufficient, while the Colonial Conference thought £72,000 would be needed. Mr. Sandford Fleming suggests five routes, his object being to touch only at places where British influence is supreme. But the Wellington Conference proposed that the cable should touch at both the Sandwich Islands and Samoa.

In opposition to the scheme important representations have been submitted to the Marquis of Ripon on behalf of the cable companies which control the existing lines between the United Kingdom and Australasia. They urge that the existing service was established solely by private enterprise, no Government subsidy, guarantee, or exclusive landing rights having been granted to the company. A cheap tariff was tried in 1891-92 and resulted in a loss of £55,000, borne equally by the guaranteeing Australian Governments and the

1894

X