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REMARKS on Direct Telegraphic Communication throughout the Empire, by Sandford Fleming, Delegate of the Board of Trade of the City of Ottawa, to the Second Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, held in London, in 1892.

I do not propose to dwell on the importance, and even the necessity, of a complete telegraph system as a means of defending our world-wide Empire, quite apart from its commerce. This almost self-evident proposition has been set forth at other times and places. I shall, as is most fitting on this occasion, consider the subject mainly from its commercial aspects.

A large part of the discussions at the Congress has turned upon drawing more closely the links of connection not only between the Mother Country and the outlying parts of the Empire, but also between the various great groups of colonies. The strongest views have been uttered upon this point, and resolutions have been formally presented and unanimously passed, giving expression to the opinion that every step should be taken which would tend to increase the feeling among British subjects in every part of the world that they are one people, and that they have common interests in trade and commerce.

That the telegraph has already operated towards this end in a very remarkable way is evident to all; that it may do so still more in the future is equally clear. Few questions, therefore, can have higher claims upon the attention of the Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire than those which relate to telegraphic communications. The application of electricity to telegraphy has given to the world an entirely new means of communication, the most sensitive and the most useful that the mind of man can conceive. In no department of human activity is its utility more constantly thrust upon us than in the fields of commerce. Everywhere the opening of trade relations is quickly followed by the construction of telegraph lines, indeed, in new countries, such as Canada and Australia, the telegraph is not seldom the pioneer of settlement and railways. Everywhere the connection by telegraph and cable stimulates and facilitates commercial intercourse. The extraordinary extent of the change thus brought about is illustrated by the fact that, for communication across the Atlantic, no less than ten submarine cables are now in constant use instead of the one which first came into continuous use a quarter of a century ago. It is further strikingly illustrated by the rapid growth of telegraphic intercourse with the East and Australasia, necessitating an increase in the number of wires employed. Already, more than £1,000 per day are spent on telegraphic communication between the United Kingdom and the Australasian Colonies alone.

British shipping, which controls so large a part of the carrying trade of the world, has come to depend in great measure upon telegraphic advice for its most effective employment. The overwhelming relative interest which British people have in this comparatively modern means of communication is further proved by the fact that, out of the 125,000 miles of ocean cables now in existence, at least 90,000 are owned by our people and carried on under their management, leaving only about 35,000 miles, or about one-fourth of the whole, for all the other nations of the world. The proportion furnishes no bad measure of the preponderance of British commerce. Great, however, as British enterprise has been in the matter of cable construction, the development of the outlying parts of the Empire is constantly making upon it new demands. One great field has been left entirely untouched, and to it I now wish to direct special attention.

It may almost be taken for granted that, as British commerce expands, nothing short of a complete system, bridging all the great oceans, will fully satisfy its wants. For the present the Atlantic is not inadequately provided for by the ten cables to which I have referred, while another is now being added to the two laid to South America. The configuration of the Indian Ocean makes the various lines which skirt its coasts satisfy the immediate necessities of the case. The Pacific alone is not traversed by a single line of wire.

That this condition of things presents a serious hindrance to commercial development that from a strategic point of view it indicates a serious flaw in our national system for the defence of commerce, are positions which appear capable of conclusive proof.

At the present time the two largest divisions of the Empire, Canada and Australia, though actually separated from each other by only the Pacific Ocean, are telegraphically separated by but little short of the whole circumference of the globe. Both countries have growing interests upon the Pacific, both are manifestly destined to become great powers bordering upon that ocean, and both look forward to an increased commercial intercourse with each other. Circumstances might easily arise in the near future which would make it of the greatest consequence that these two countries should be prepared to exercise their influence jointly, in order that it may be exercised most effectually. Obviously, for either closer commercial relations or for joint action, better telegraphic connection is all but an absolute necessity.

The cost of sending messages from Canada to Australia is now prohibitive for all practical purposes. With a wire traversing the Pacific it would be reduced to the lowest possible figure, since the line would be fully employed as an alternative route for European messages to and from the South Pacific. Australians should remember, too, that easy and cheap communication with Canada means the same with the whole continent of America, so closely are the Canadian and American systems connected with each other.

When I brought this subject before the Colonial Conference of 1887, to which I was a delegate representing Canada, I proved by arguments and figures, which have never yet been refuted, that the cost of sending messages between Great Britain and Australia over the proposed Pacific line would be far cheaper than by any existing route. Since that time the cost of sending such messages has been reduced one-half, and yet the cost per word by the Pacific route as then stated by me would be little more than one-half of the present reduced rates by Eastern routes. The calcula-