

If the adjustment of the break power depended entirely on the knowledge acquired by soundings taken previously on the selected route of the cable, grave doubts might still exist whether the laying of the Pacific Cable could be proceeded with without further information being obtained by carefully taking soundings over the exact route. Fortunately, means have been devised to indicate to the breaksman continuously the percentage of slack with which the cable is paid out, and thus it is possible to lay a cable over a route of which only the general features are known. This contrivance has been used with perfect success in the laying of six Atlantic cables, so that there is no doubt as to its performance realising its theoretical advantages. The depth of water met with in the Atlantic reaches 3000 fathoms in several places where the cables have been laid, so there is no doubt about the possibility of laying the cable in 3500 fathoms, or even more. To be sure it will be necessary to select a type of cable which combines great strength with light weight, but there is no difficulty in this either, as it has been possible to construct cables for the Atlantic which will carry 7000 fathoms of their own length before they break. It may, therefore, be taken for granted that any technical obstacles which were apprehended in 1887 have now been overcome, and the cable can be laid as soon as the financial question has been settled." Then we come to the fact that the Canadian Government, in compliance with the resolution passed by the Conference, requesting them to make enquiries and ascertain the cost of laying the cable, called at once for tenders for the laying of the cable over eight alternative routes. As a consequence they have received four series of tenders, the lowest in all cases being from the India Rubber, Gutta Percha, and Telegraph Works Company. Mr Siemens was also one of the tenderers. The lowest tender of the series is No. 4, "Vancouver to Bowen direct, with stations at Bowen, Apamana, and San Christoval, £1,068,000." The prices which have been received from these firms of course give now a practical basis on which to judge what the cost of laying this cable will be, and I may add within these prices is included an obligation on the part of the Company to bear the charge of keeping the cable in order for three years. The first impression produced by the disclosure of these figures is that hitherto the estimated cost of laying cables has been very much exaggerated, or else modern improvements in the manufacture and laying of cables have been so rapid as to alter altogether the estimated cost of the cable as compared with those of the past. In no case has a tender of this firm reached the estimate that Mr Fleming named as the cost of laying the cable. In his estimate of the cost he has been very much above what is asked by the lowest tenderer. We have now the question brought forward to this point,—that we can, at a cost of between one and one and a half millions of money have cable communication made between Australia and Canada, and we can thereby secure an alternative line of communication with Great Britain, passing through British territory the whole way. I think I am correct in saying that the Trans-Pacific Cable question is now within measurable distance of solution, and, as Mr Siemens points out, only requires now the settlement of the financial question. Now there are several matters in connection with a cable question of this kind to be considered. Mr Siemens is so impressed with its feasibility that he is himself prepared to undertake the work. All that remains is to secure combined action. I quite agree with what Mr Fysh said on a previous occasion, that he regretted there was no combined body capable of taking up and dealing with questions like this, as the Dominion Parliament of Canada is able to do. There is a fear always that we will be compelled to regard our own diverse and petty local interests, and to overlook the higher, and, to us individually, the more important questions. There is this difference between this proposal and that moved by Mr Ward, and that is, that every colony will share equally in the benefits to be derived from the Pacific Cable. At the present time I look upon it that the chief difficulty, and the difficulty we ought to address ourselves to, is the question of getting combined action in Australasia. The attitude of Canada has always been so sincere and outspoken on this subject that I do not for one moment venture to doubt her *bona fides*, and I think if the Canadian Government and the Australian Government combined, and offered to take their share of the laying of this cable, the Imperial Government will not be very backward in giving its proportion of assistance towards this undertaking. However, it will depend on the course we take. If we can all combine to regard this question in the light it would be regarded in if the colonies were federated, and take each our share, not only in the risk but in the credit, I think we will be setting a very good example. Now, the question of cost has been practically settled by the result of the tenders received, and the estimates which have been made from time to time are very interesting. I may say that on this question of apportioning the cost of construction, working, and maintenance, I have adopted the same basis as that adopted by the Conference at Sydney in 1888,—as was used afterwards in 1894 in New Zealand,—and as was generally accepted at the Ottawa Conference. Objections may be raised by Canada or Great Britain to the suggested apportionment on the ground that as Australasia would be the chief recipient of benefits from the construction of the cable, her proportion of the outlay should be larger; but any objection of that kind may be answered by saying that whatever may be the direct interest of the people of Australasia, the indirect interest of the people of Great Britain and the interest of Canada would be fairly represented in the manner I have suggested. I will not detain this Conference long with figures, but we may assume that the capital required need not exceed £1,300,000, while by adopting the direct route by Bowen, No. 4 Route, £1,100,000 would be enough. Assuming the capital required at £1,300,000, it would involve an annual charge for interest at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of £32,500. The working expenses were estimated very carefully by Mr Siemens and Mr Fleming, and there was very little difference between their calculations. They come to £30,000. This would give a fixed charge to be met by