

Mr WARD *Pro formá* I rise to second the motion, but I may say at once that I regret I am unable to support it, because I differ from the mover in several very important matters. I do not propose to take up the time of the Conference with details. I compliment Mr Thynne upon having so intelligently placed the matter before the Conference, I would, however, remind the Conference of the resolution passed at the Conference in New Zealand last year. I may say that I for one do not think that Canada has done what she ought to have done in connection with this matter. If we are desirous of arriving at finality in this matter we ought to have some practical evidence of what Canada and England are prepared to do—something more than placing before us formally the tenders received. I take it that if the Governments are prepared to guarantee that should be a sufficient security to those who desire to invest in this stock. It has been apparent to me that Canada and England want the Australasian Colonies to do more than they are fairly called on to do. Now I am quite prepared to say, on behalf of New Zealand, that if such an unprecedented change arises as our being left in the cold so far as cable guarantees are concerned, we are prepared to do a great deal more than heretofore; but we are not in that position, and I hope that we will never be. We are prepared to stand in with the other Colonies in this matter, but at the same time we want to see the Canadians approach it in a broader spirit and not throw the whole of the responsibility on these Colonies. Every effort should be made by this Conference to see that fair representations are made, and that the Canadian Government should be made to realise the advances we have already made in the matter. The resolutions are too far-reaching, and on that account I cannot see my way to support them. I should be glad to support a resolution of a more general character to keep the matter alive. I have only seconded the motion *pro forma* to allow the question to be fully and fairly discussed. In my own opinion there are few matters of greater importance than having low cable rates between here and the old world, as it is to the far-away parts of the world that our producers will have to look in the future; and in this regard low cable rates are a of vital importance. Speaking for New Zealand, though we cannot support the resolutions as they stand, we are desirous of co-operating with the other Colonies to obtain cheap cable rates.

Mr COOK I am in the same position as Mr Ward in regard to the resolution submitted. The Colony I represent is as anxious as I believe most of the Colonies are to have an alternative system of communication to the various countries of the world, but at the same time we are not prepared to go to the extent of the drastic resolutions submitted by the Hon. Member from Queensland. It will be in the recollection of the Conference that at the last Postal Conference a resolution was submitted, affirming the desirableness of this cable being carried out by a private Company and subsidised by the various Governments. The result of the tendering in Canada shows very clearly that not one of the companies will take the risk and responsibility on their own shoulders; they make offers indeed to maintain the cable for three years, but that is a very short space indeed in the life of a cable. I desire to emphasise what Mr Ward has said in regard to the want of practical sympathy on the part of Great Britain, as I do not think we have been treated as well as we had a right to expect, the same may be said of Canada—she sends us out these bald tenders for our information, and hopes we will continue from our side of the water to agitate to bring matters to a practical conclusion. It appears to me that it is for them to submit an alternative proposal. If the matter is such a good one one might readily expect these Companies who have tendered to undertake it with some degree of alacrity, but none of them will take the risk beyond the three years. As to the route, it appears to me that unless we can get some of the Islands, at any rate, it will be a very precarious thing as a business venture, we have it stated in the newspapers that America won't concede any point in respect of the Hawaiian Group. The last information we got was on the 26th of last month, which states that the Committee of the United States Senate had reported adversely as to granting England a cable station in the vicinity of Hawaii. I don't know, really, that it is in the power of this Conference to discuss the matter on the lines suggested by the Hon. Member from Queensland—it is a matter of policy for the various Governments to consider rather than a business arrangement for this Conference. I do think before we take any further steps in the matter beyond a very general resolution, the various Governments should enter into negotiations and determine the lines upon which it should be proceeded with. I am inclined to think that at the last Conference we went a little further than we should have done. It seems to me that the practicability of the route is not altogether determined upon, and that the estimate of the returns expected from it has been very much exaggerated. I beg to move an amendment, as follows:

“That this Conference re-affirms the desirableness of the construction of the Pacific cable to connect the Australian Colonies and Canada; and in view of the ascertained practicability of the scheme, respectfully urges upon the various Colonial Governments that steps be taken for the furtherance of the project at the earliest opportunity”

I think that is as far as it is desirable we should go in the matter at the present time.

Mr FYSH: I think the amendment is worthy of consideration, but I am thankful to Mr. Thynne for the elaborate and painstaking way in which he placed the whole business before us. While he was speaking my memory was being refreshed with the history of the commencement of these proceedings. We find that the statesmen and Government of England are standing aloof from this proposal, and it is contemplated to place the Governments of Australia and Canada in the undesirable position of taking up a commercial speculation. What Governments do in matters of this kind they do boldly. The times are completely out of joint in regard to subsidising cable.