

Hon. J. R. DICKSON: Well, we would have been prepared to discharge any liability that might have arisen. (Laughter.) He hoped the public would clearly understand the position. It was that up to the present the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company expected a continuance of the subsidy already paid for 10 years more, and that without any reduction whatever in the cable rates (excepting some proposed minor reductions to the press and Government business), and that in face of the fact that the business had been continually increasing, and would doubtless continue to increase in the course of the next 10 years. The Company should be prepared to submit better terms, or permit some other means of communication by cable which would give these Colonies the advantages they ought to possess. He looked upon the proposed cable from the Mauritius as actually detrimental. It seemed that a cable *via* the Cape to the Mauritius was a matter that the Imperial authorities had approved of, and that its construction to that point had already been decided upon on account of its strategic advantages. The extension of that line to Australia (as well as to India) was what the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company had submitted for the consideration of this Conference, and to his mind it did not offer the advantages of duplication which the Pacific cable route would afford. But whether it would furnish a duplication or not, if it would confer upon the people of these Colonies cheaper cable communication he would be prepared to say that Queensland would join her sister Colonies in fairly considering it. He said that much because he recognised that although the Company had made a considerable amount of money out of their cable communication with Australia, they had furnished a very beneficial service between Australia and the rest of the civilised world. It was, undoubtedly, a company with strength and power, and fully capable of undertaking any increased cable accommodation financially, and having the plant to carry out such undertakings without unnecessary delay. If, therefore, they were able to meet the Conference with cheaper rates, he thought the Eastern Extension Company deserved consideration. Mr. Warren had been most attentive and courteous in the matter of these negotiations, and was to be absolutely excluded from all blame, for he had doubtless done his part in seeking to obtain for the Conference the information desired.

Hon. J. G. JENKINS joined with the other speakers in regretting that they were unable to come to some arrangement, either in the way of a renewal or some other arrangement with the Company. He would have been pleased if Mr. Warren had been able to place before them some proposal to reduce the charges to the public, irrespective of any line from the Cape. It was to be deplored that some arrangement could not be entered into with the Company for a number of years irrespective of any other line. There was nothing to be feared, however, although there would be some delay. It might appear as if they were placed in the power of the Company by failing to enter into some arrangement. It was very likely that within a few months' time they would be able to speak to the Company as a National Australasia, and then fresh negotiations might be opened up. There was no danger of excessive charges being made on the public in future. Excessive charges would only bring into existence early competition.

Hon. JOSEPH COOK wished to refer to a statement that had been made by the Hon. J. Gavan Duffy with regard to the construction of the Cape cable. It had already been decided to construct the cable from Mauritius, irrespective of any connection with Australia. Out of the 14,000 miles to be constructed *via* the Cape route, 10,000 miles had already been decided upon. Therefore, whether they agreed to any subsidy or not, that part of the cable had to be constructed, and, perhaps, the cable would be taken from Mauritius to India. The only part of connection they were directly interested in was from the Colonies to Mauritius. That was about 4000 miles. It was always represented by the Company that the cost would be £2,700,000. The great point to be considered was that the Colonies were interested in a small modicum of that sum, and that was a feature he would like the public to thoroughly understand.

Motion put and passed.

Hon. J. R. DICKSON said the matter of maintaining communication with the outside world was considered one of primary importance in Queensland. They believed that by the construction of a Pacific cable *via* Vancouver, communication would not only be obtained with the great districts of the Dominion, but it would also enable them to introduce a cheaper system of telegraphic communication than was likely to be obtained from any private company. It would have the advantage of destroying a monopoly, which at present was certainly not tending to reduce the charges commensurate with public business, and would also answer requirements until the time arrived when the Governments of Australasia, the Dominion, and Great Britain, acting in concert, could construct a line connecting the different portions of the Empire. The Premiers of the colonies had met from time to time to consider the question, and no later than this year the Committee made a recommendation on the subject. Therefore the question of communication had never been lost sight of. As the hour was getting late he would not detain them any longer, but move—

“That this Conference re-affirms the opinion that, in the interests of Australasia the Pacific cable project should be consummated as speedily as practicable, and that the Governments of the various Australasian colonies be requested to represent to the Imperial and Dominion Governments the foregoing opinion, together with the proposal of the Premiers, as agreed to at their recent Conference held in Melbourne, viz.:—‘That if Great Britain and Canada would each contribute one-third of the cost, the Colonies would be prepared to contribute the remaining one-third.’”

Hon. J. GAVAN DUFFY seconded the Resolution.