

the working staff, with duplicate sets of all proper instruments at each station; also the use of two steamships fitted with cable-tanks and all necessary machinery for repairing the cable, and the cost of maintaining these ships as well as the cables themselves for three years." The Company, if entrusted with the contract, also undertook to manufacture the cable at the rate of 20 miles a day, and to proceed to ship and lay it with the least possible delay.

It should be explained that the tender of £1,517,000 is for a cable with a capacity of twelve words a minute. A fifteen-word cable the same Company would supply for £1,672,000, and an eighteen-word cable for £1,880,000. Probably a cable with a capacity of only twelve words a minute would not carry the business which might be expected a few years hence.

Hobart Conference, 1895.

At the Hobart Conference in 1895 the Pacific cable question was again brought forward, and the following resolution adopted: "This Conference reaffirms the desirableness of the construction of a Pacific cable to connect the Australasian 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."

Sydney Conference, 1896.

Then followed the Postal Conference at Sydney in January, 1896. All the colonies were represented, and the Pacific cable question was advanced a stage by a decision as to which of the routes tendered for should be adopted. Differences of opinion whether the cable should come to Queensland or New Zealand were settled by a compromise, under which the cable is to be landed at Norfolk Island and branch from there to New Zealand and Queensland. This is the route known as No. 1. Resolutions were also adopted affirming—

(1.) That the Pacific cable should be constructed and owned jointly by the various Governments interested.

(2.) That the landing-places should be only on places belonging to or under control of the British Empire.

(3.) That the cost of construction, working, and maintenance should be borne by Great Britain, Canada, and the Australasian Colonies, each division taking one-third of the liability.

(4.) That the route from Fiji to Australia be *via* Norfolk Island, thence bifurcating to the nearest convenient landing-place in the north of New Zealand and Moreton Bay respectively.

(5.) That it is desirable that South Australia join the other colonies in the Pacific cable project, and the terms on which that colony will come in be ascertained.

Imperial Cable Committee, 1896.

Towards the close of 1896 a committee known as the Imperial Cable Committee met in London. Its members comprised two representatives from each of the great communities interested, viz., Great Britain, Canada, and Australasia—the latter represented by the Agents-General for New South Wales and Victoria. The Committee sat for fifteen days, took voluminous evidence, both expert and official, and the report of the proceedings includes the most complete data yet brought together on the question.

The Committee reported in January, 1897, but the proceedings up to the present are still regarded as confidential, under instructions from the Imperial authorities.

Australasian Chambers of Commerce, 1897.

The Australasian Chambers of Commerce, at a conference held at Sydney in June, 1897, passed a resolution strongly urging the early construction of the Pacific cable—a proof that the commercial community is in accord with the colonial Governments.

Conference of Premiers, 1897.

At a conference of the Premiers of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and New Zealand, at Melbourne in March last year, a strong hope was expressed that the construction of the Pacific cable might be decided upon at an early date, and the decision of the Sydney Conference of the previous year re-affirmed.

Premiers in London, 1897.

During the visit of the colonial Premiers to London last year, the Pacific cable was discussed with the representatives of the Imperial and Canadian Governments, but without practical results, mainly owing to the apparent want of interest shown by the representatives of Canada.

Proposed Alternative Route *via* Cape Colony—Perth.

Meanwhile, the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company brought forward a proposal for an alternative cable service between Great Britain and Australia *via* Gibraltar—Sierra Leone—Ascension—St. Helena—Cape Town—Durban—Mauritius—Rodriguez Island—Cocos and Albany (Western Australia). For this cable the company asked a subsidy of £32,400 per annum for ten years, and were prepared to continue the cable to Glenelg (South Australia) on the guarantee being extended from ten to twenty years. No reduction of rates, however, was proposed by the company.

Duplicate Cable Subsidy—Cape Cable.

It may be explained that the £32,400 is the amount guaranteed by the colonies (except Queensland and New Zealand) to the Cable Company in respect to the duplication of the cable between Port Darwin and Java for a period of twenty years, expiring in 1899. The proposed cable *via* the Cape is also regarded as an "all-red" line—i.e., the several landing-places would be on territory owned by or under the control of Great Britain. The length of the cable would be about 13,000 miles, and the estimated cost between two and a half and three million pounds sterling. The Cape Government, it is understood, has agreed to provide the required guarantee for the section from England to Cape Town, which alone was favourably reported upon by the committee which recently met in London, at the instance of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to consider the Eastern Telegraph Company's proposal.