

siderations will, I think, appeal to the good sense and the patriotism of Australians, with whom now rests the responsibility of determining whether or not the long projected Pacific cable shall become an accomplished fact.

A single word respecting the proposed cable from Australia to the Cape which for some time has been advocated as a substitute for the Pacific cable. The company proposing to lay that cable offer to lower rates on messages between Australia and England from 4s. 9d. to 4s. per word, on conditions that certain concessions be granted them. The offer may be tempting, but the small immediate gain is not to be compared with the loss which Australia would suffer if the Pacific cable, and together with it the great Imperial scheme, be *per force* abandoned. Has not *Æsop* many centuries ago spoken to countless generations of mankind and told them that in grasping at a shadow the substance may be lost? Speaking for myself, I hold that nothing can take the place of the Pacific cable, and I feel it to be in the interests of the British Empire that no new obstacle should be raised to obstruct the immediate accomplishment of that undertaking. While I firmly hold to that opinion, at the same time I recognise that we cannot have too many cables, if they be judiciously established, to meet public needs. I am, therefore, unable to see any great reason for objecting to the Cape-Australian cable, provided full provision be made for bringing it at any time when required under State control. Under State control it would, in conjunction with the Pacific cable, constitute the major portion of the great Imperial telegraph system.

Having thus briefly expressed my views, the two points which, in conclusion, I would strongly urge are these: (1.) That nothing be done or left undone to further retard the establishment of the Pacific cable. (2.) That in any agreement for laying a cable between Australia and the Cape ultimate State ownership be kept in view and strictly provided for.

I have, &c.,

SANDFORD FLEMING.

Enclosure in No. 130.

REMARKS ON AN ALL-BRITISH CABLE SYSTEM, submitted at the Annual Meeting of the British Empire League in Canada, March 14th, 1900, by Sir SANDFORD FLEMING.

I ASK permission to submit some remarks bearing on a public question which concerns the whole British people. The people of the British Empire are of all origins; they occupy a collection of States in every region on the surface of the globe, and as the prime object of this league is to unite these peoples, I am satisfied that there is no subject which can more appropriately be considered here to-day than the one to which I propose to invite your attention.

There are already telegraph cables laid from the centre of the Empire to the great colonies in the southern hemisphere, but these cables are in the hands of private companies; on their way from the shores of England to Australia, to South Africa, and to India, these cables touch at foreign ports, or pass over the lands of foreign states, or are laid in shallow seas bordering the shores of foreign nations; they are therefore liable to interruption at a critical moment. Moreover, the charges for the transmission of ordinary messages which are exacted by the companies are so high that the use of the cables is practically forbidden to all but a few persons. In the interests of commerce, of social and political intercourse, and of general public safety, it is felt that a much freer means of communication than now exists is indispensable.

The British people throughout the globe own one flag—they pay homage to one Sovereign—they indeed have many interests in common—they now, or soon will, have one cheap postage, and it is with no little pride and satisfaction we can point to the fact that it is our present Postmaster-General, Mr. Mulock, to whom the British people everywhere, to a large extent, will be indebted for that boon.

The principle of penny postage being adopted and in part put in practice, we are naturally led to consider if it be possible to make a corresponding advance in the matter of telegraphy. We ask ourselves the question, Is it practicable to link the Empire together by a comprehensive cable system, and, if it be practicable, should we take means to enjoy the advantages which it would bring? For my own part I am unable on the one hand to perceive any insuperable obstacle in the way, and on the other I can see nothing that would more tend to unite our people in every longitude than a globe-encircling cable-system under State control.

The scheme is not now broached for the first time, it was the dominant idea at the Colonial Conferences of 1887 and 1894; since these gatherings the suggestion has again and again been brought forward and views expressed in support of the project have been strengthened by reflection and confirmed by experience. To-day it is not for me to enlarge on the scheme or dilate upon the advantages to spring from it. I will merely state that a complete system of telegraphic cables for the whole Empire may be established without involving any extraordinary expenditure. And with respect to the question of State ownership the evidence is indisputable and convincing. I need only refer to the admirable system of land telegraphy throughout the United Kingdom.

The telegraphs of the United Kingdom were at one time the property of private companies who made large profits at the public expense. They adopted the policy of exacting high charges, in some cases ten and twelve times higher than the rates now levied. These companies, like other companies of the present day, made every effort to maintain the monopolistic privileges they enjoyed. It was decreed by Parliament, however, to establish a national system, and the whole came under State control. Since then the telegraph lines have been extended to the remotest places in England, Ireland, and Scotland, and the charges on messages have been so reduced that any two persons, however widely sundered, may interchange their views on any subject at the small cost of 1 cent per word.

This is the result of State control—under State control the utility of the telegraph has been enormously increased, and the charges on messages have been reduced in an inverse ratio to its increased utility. Moreover, it is satisfactory to know that every advantage has been gained with-