

cheaper agency than steam—that is to say, electricity—is at command; and we may ask ourselves the question, Is it not incumbent on the Government to take the fullest advantage of this Heaven-sent means of conquering time and distance?

I submit for your consideration three remarkable facts:—

(1.) Canada remains the only country in the British Empire where the telegraph service is not State-owned.

(2.) With two single exceptions, Canada and the United States, the telegraph service of every civilised nation on the face of the globe is controlled by the State.

(3.) In Canada and the United States the charges for the transmission of telegraph messages are practically double the rates charged in all other civilised countries.

I leave it with you gentlemen of the “fourth estate” to determine how long this condition of affairs should last in this British Dominion.

Great Ulterior Benefits.

“A cheaper telegraph service.”—The subject on which I have been asked to address you is not simply a domestic question concerning Canada alone; it is a matter of Imperial and inter-colonial concern, and may well be considered not only by the Canadian Press Association, but by the statesmen who will be gathered together at the coming conference in London next June. On that occasion it may “be assumed that the bent of the Colonial Secretary’s mind will be found in accordance with the desire of the colonial representatives.”

At this stage in the history of the British people a widespread interest has arisen in Imperial matters. The South African war has given to the Imperial idea a great impulse. As we view it from a Canadian standpoint, we feel ourselves awakened to the fact that the Dominion of Canada forms no inconsiderable part of the surface of the globe which is designated British, and that if we do our part aright we should take a leading place in a great political organization—the British Empire—now in process of growth and development. Our geographical position is in itself commanding. Writing in 1894, the colonial editor of the *Times* said of Canada, “She possesses without question a position of central importance in the British Empire: the Atlantic Ocean gives her natural communication with the United Kingdom and South Africa; the Pacific offers her equally easy communication with India and Australia and the East. She commands the commercial highroad of two hemispheres.” Is it not fitting, then, that we should bestir ourselves; that we should not allow the besetting sin of apathy to obstruct itself; that we should in all respects perform the filial duties befitting the eldest daughter in the great family of British nations?

To-day the widely sundered groups of British people, comprising diverse races and creeds and languages, are animated by a community of sentiment; they have fallen heir to great possessions in all quarters of the globe; and it is surely one of their first duties to safeguard, to consolidate, and develop their magnificent heritage. To bring the Empire into shape and form many things are needed: in not a few of these we Canadians can render yeoman aid; in some things we may, indeed, as we have already done in the matter of Imperial penny postage, take a leading part. I propose to point out what Canada can do for the Empire by placing the telegraph service by land and sea, between Vancouver and London, under State control.

At the Press banquet last night, where I had the honour to be a favoured guest, it was pointed out very forcibly by the Premier that, in the interest of unity, stability, and progress, one of the most important offices of the Press is to cultivate friendly relations between the various elements of the population. “In my own time,” said Sir Wilfrid, “I have seen daily and yearly the work of unification of our country.” “The members of the association have done a great deal to promote that harmony”—this feeling would grow the more the people of the several provinces became acquainted with each other. Is not this beneficent function of the Press of wide application? I think you will all concede that the King’s subjects everywhere should be better acquainted than they now are; that, as far as possible, the several great groups of British people around the globe should be on terms of intimacy. I ask, does that condition now prevail? What intimacy have we with our nearest British neighbours on the western side? What do New-Zealanders and Australians know of us, or we of them? The answer is—next to nothing. And how under present conditions could any intimacy, if it existed, be maintained? As Professor Short pointed out in the last *Canadian Magazine*, the component parts of the Empire stand most in need of a better knowledge of each other. To this end we have to invoke the powerful good offices of the Press, aided by the telegraph, the most perfect means yet discovered or likely to be discovered for the free interchange of knowledge.

A comprehensive telegraph system, extending to every British possession in both hemispheres, has been projected, and in order to reduce the cost of transmission to the lowest charge it is held to be indispensable that the whole service should be under State control. The Pacific cable is regarded as the initial section of the Pan-Britannic system, and this great undertaking is now in progress under a Board of Management constituted by six British Governments. It will come to the memory of some present, and it will be remembered with pathetic interest, that the last public words spoken by a Canadian Premier, a few hours before he passed away at Windsor Castle, were in reference to and in support of this the pioneer section of the Pan-Britannic telegraph system.

The Pacific cable is under contract to be completed within the present year: if its establishment be followed by the nationalisation of the Canadian land telegraphs, together with a State-controlled means of telegraphy across the Atlantic, a new and exceedingly important stage in the development of the all-British globe-encircling telegraph system will have been reached. Then it will be possible for the sister colonies, New Zealand and Australia, to unite with Canada in extending the postal telegraph service of the Mother country across the Atlantic and across the Pacific. Then the Empire will be in possession of a continuous chain of State-controlled electric