

Would it not be in the interest of a great commercial people to have these and all such points in the outer empire connected by a means of communication so perfect as the electric telegraph? Is it not a matter which vitally concerns every British community around the globe? Is it not in their common interest that they all should be placed in possession of the speediest means of conveying intelligence the one to the other, free from the burden of high charges?

That a State-owned Pacific cable is the key to the situation I am firmly convinced. Exhaustive examinations have proved its entire practicability. Its financial aspect has been minutely investigated by business men of the highest rank. The Canadian Government appointed Lord Strathcona and the Hon. A. G. Jones for this purpose, than whom there are no men with stronger business insight. Their report is in the possession of the Government, and it takes the most favourable view of the project. As a State undertaking it would be self-supporting from the first year of its establishment, and would admit of charges being lowered year by year. That the final outcome of the laying of this cable would be an Imperial telegraph service there can be little doubt. I am satisfied that the Pacific cable would prove to be the entering wedge to remove for ever all monopoly in ocean telegraphy, and free the public from excessive charges; that it would be the initial link in a chain of State cables encircling the globe, with branches ramifying wherever the British Empire extends; and that it would be the means of bringing into momentary electric touch every possession of Her Majesty.

In 1837 Rowland Hill, in advocating uniform penny postage for the United Kingdom, pointed out how desirable it would be to have the same low rates as on inland letters charged on letters passing to and from the colonies. This remarkable man concluded with the memorable words, "There is perhaps scarcely any measure which would tend so effectually to remove the obstacles to emigration, and maintain that sympathy between the colonies and the Mother country which is the only sure bond of connection, as the proposed reduction on the postage of colonial letters." Had Sir Rowland Hill known of the means of instantaneous communication which, since his day, has been placed at our command, he assuredly would have viewed it as the most civilising agency of the century. He would have seen that, while promoting the activities of trade and commerce and improving the well-being of the human race, nothing would more tend to deepen the sympathies of our people and make firm the foundations of the Empire than the adding to a universal penny postage the incalculable advantage of a State-controlled ocean-telegraph system encircling the globe.

Holding the views which I have ventured to submit, I feel that in the public interest I should greatly err if I failed to seek an opportunity of giving expression to them.

I have, &c.,

SANDFORD FLEMING.

The Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies.

NO. 3.—STATE-OWNED TELEGRAPHS FOR THE EMPIRE.

Letter to His Excellency the Earl of Hopetoun, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. By Sir Sandford Fleming.

MY LORD,—

Ottawa, 3rd December, 1900.

I had the honour, in October, 1898, to address the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, on the subject of a State-owned system of cables for the British Empire. My letter was made public, and the records of the Press show that much interest was awakened, and that a singular unanimity of opinion was evinced in favour of the proposal. Since that date events have occurred which, while they have had the effect of diverting attention from the subject, have at the same time in a remarkable degree emphasized its importance, especially to Australasia. I venture to think, therefore, that no time could be more opportune for its consideration than on the occurrence of the inauguration of the new Commonwealth.

In asking Your Excellency to be good enough to bring the remarks which follow before the Government of the Commonwealth, I am unable to claim that I hold any official position. It is merely as a Canadian subject of Her Majesty that I make the request, and, as such, I feel we in Canada desire to think that we enjoy privileges and have interests and rights in common with our fellow-subjects in Australia. While I venture to speak for my countrymen on the subject of this communication—and there are substantial reasons why I should do so—it is not without hesitation that I assume the self-imposed duty; but all hesitation must be set aside in view of the words of Your Excellency in bidding farewell a few weeks back at Hopetoun House, in Scotland: "This is no time for any one to hang back when he can serve the Empire. Some can serve as soldiers, and right well have many done so during the past twelve months; others can serve in other capacities."

I appeal, then, to Your Excellency in this spirit, satisfied that there are none so humble who cannot do faithful service. I appeal to Your Excellency under the firm conviction which has been forced on me that the subject of this communication demands immediate and earnest attention. I venture strenuously and respectfully to urge that it be one of the first matters brought to the consideration of your Government.

In Canada not less than in Australia we have an abiding desire to serve the Empire. Soon after Canadians embarked in the constitutional career in which the Australian people are about to enter they undertook a work of Imperial magnitude—the establishment of a telegraph and railway across the Continent of North America. Long before the undertaking was completed it became apparent that the electric wire on reaching the Pacific from the East should be extended across the western ocean. The first proposal to connect Canada with Australia by a trans-Pacific electric cable was published in returns relating to the Canadian Pacific Railway laid before Parliament in 1880. From that date until the present the Canadian parliamentary records give evidence that the project has always been kept prominently in view.