

21st October to the 15th November last. A few days after its restoration came the news of another interruption of more than a week's duration between Aden and Zanzibar to another unduplicated cable, laid twenty years ago. Both of these were lines upon which they had to depend for the rapid transmission of news from the seat of war, and when these were interrupted they were only able to get news by the long land-line through Natal to Capetown, and so home along the west coast of Africa cables. Were they not entitled to ask to what uses those public funds, so lavishly supplied, had been devoted? Was it understood that these subsidies were to be applied, however indirectly, towards buying out or expropriating accessible land-lines in other parts of the world for the deliberate purpose of smothering and strangling competition, instead of being employed to keep the cables so freely subsidised in a state of efficiency by timely duplication, so that in the hour of need they might be of service to the nation?" He also said, "A good deal of the toleration shown by the public towards these companies was undoubtedly attributable to the belief—(1) that they were in possession of all-British cables, (2) that these cables were altogether beyond the reach of danger in times of war. He was afraid that the intelligent British public had lulled themselves into a false sense of security, for not only were these companies' cables not all-British, they were not even mainly fixed on British landings; the bulk of them were switched on at Lisbon, Madeira, St. Vincent, Egypt, Java, and other foreign territories; and, as regarded their vulnerability, he had pointed out in letters to the *Times* that several cables were easily cut by the American men-of-war, and in some cases, as in the case of Hongkong to the Philippines, cable communication was wholly interrupted, Admiral Dewey having had no difficulty in performing the operation. In the House of Lords, Lord Carnarvon stated, in 1885, that 'the Russian Government had a carefully elaborated scheme for taking measures against our submarine cables in eastern waters.' Sir John Ardagh, Director of the Military Intelligence Department, distinctly pointed out 'that in the event of our losing Egypt, or anything happening in that country adverse to our interests, the Mediterranean cables to Australia, India, and the East generally would be cut at once.' This actually did occur during the bombardment of Alexandria." The very high rates charged by the Eastern Extension Company had enabled them to amass large funds which they were able to use to fight any other cable proposed, and if Queensland did not reject the offer now the company at a later period would simply amass further sums to fight the proposal if it came up. The need for an all-British cable was very apparent. In times like this, when we had to depend upon rapid information, it was necessary that our cables should not be in the hands of any foreign power. The Pacific-cable scheme had so far progressed that the Commission was appointed—it was sitting now; they had called for estimates, and had found that the cost of the cable would reach £1,800,000. It was intended to call for tenders during this year. Under these circumstances, to allow the company to follow its old tactics would be to overshadow the Pacific scheme; and a very strong stand should be taken up by the Australian Powers. The opinion of this Chamber of Commerce was very emphatic. They said that the Pacific-cable scheme must be carried through. The public of Queensland, he thought, would go so far as to say that if no one would join with them they, with Canada and New Zealand, would undertake it as a commercial undertaking; and, though he did not usually hold with the Government accepting the responsibilities of a commercial speculation, in a matter of this kind, where it was a question of national importance as well as one of commercial concern, he thought we should insist upon having the Pacific scheme adhered to, which would provide thereby an all-British cable. (Applause.)

Mr. Arthur said the best proof of the probable utility of a Pacific cable was the position the other parties were taking up. The concession offered when they were threatened with opposition must be discounted, as it was only wrung from them.

The Postmaster-General, in reply, said: I was very pleased as Postmaster-General to see that the Brisbane Chamber had passed a resolution expressing a very strong opinion on this subject, and I am more particularly pleased that you have come here to-day—no doubt at some inconvenience to yourselves—to explain the views of the Chamber to the Government. Upon this matter, as Mr. Carter has very correctly said, the Governments of Queensland for the past twenty-five years or more have been consistent in their policy of advocating the construction of the Pacific cable. In fact, it has been the consistent policy of the Governments of Queensland and the people of Queensland, I think, from the time the scheme of a Pacific cable was first mooted; and it is certainly to be very much regretted that just now, when it seemed that the construction of the cable was on the eve of accomplishment, the Eastern Extension Company should come forward with a proposal which is manifestly intended to destroy the chance of the scheme being gone on with. The reduction of rates promised, of course, has a very attractive appearance to those in the habit of using the cable; but I cannot quite understand how any intelligent community can snap at a bait like that when the purpose for which the bait is offered is so apparent. (Hear, hear.) The fact that the company is willing to make such a concession now, as Mr. Arthur has said, is an example of the value of the monopoly, which they now have a chance of losing. They have agreed to give, when they find themselves in fear of losing it, what they refused to give before. (Hear, hear.) The Government to-day is just as strong, if not stronger, in its resolve to do everything in its power to see the Pacific-cable scheme carried out, and they will countenance no proposal which will jeopardize it. (Hear, hear.) With regard to the position taken up by New South Wales, I cannot think the people of New South Wales are unanimous in the views expressed by the Postmaster-General, and I do not think the Government there can agree to go forward in direct opposition to the views of the majority of the people of Australia, and on which they have set their hearts. (Hear, hear.) With regard to whether the Government will be prepared to stand out alone with New Zealand and Canada, I will lay that view before my colleagues. I am glad to see by to-day's paper that the Postmaster-General in New Zealand has expressed the strong opinion that if Canada and Queensland stand firm with them the Pacific cable will be secured. I believe myself, I may positively say on behalf of the Government, that Queensland will stand with Canada and New Zealand in doing everything possible to cause the Pacific-cable