

9. I will endeavour to obtain information concerning the views and feeling of the Government of India. The Australasian Colonies are led to believe that the Indian Government discourages competition. Probably, when the version of the Indian Office is told, a different impression will remain. I cannot conceive that the Government of India should fail to desire to aid the Australasian Colonies.

10. You may rely that in any steps that I take, and inquiries I make, I will not commit the Government, directly or impliedly, to liability or responsibility of any kind whatever.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

JULIUS VOGEL, Agent-General.

No. 16.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER.

7, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.,

6th February, 1877.

SIR,—

In continuation of my letter of 13th January, No. 62, on the subject of duplicate cable communication, I have the honor to forward to you the subjoined copy of two telegrams forwarded by me to the New Zealand representative at the Telegraph Conference held at Sydney.

2. I was informed that such a Conference was being held, and I understood that the Eastern and Eastern Extension Companies were willing to forward without charge messages to the Conference. Besides the advantages which I took of this liberality, I deemed it desirable to forward the second of the two messages. It seemed to me very important, in case the Conference were disposed to do anything, that it should be known there was reason to think the Extension Company would be willing to treat on better terms than those disclosed in the offer already sent out.

3. I regret much to find, from a telegram in the *Times* of the 6th February, that the Conference has concluded its sittings without "arriving at any definite understanding."

4. Referring to a passage in the first telegram relating to the Imperial Government, I may explain that, after two unofficial communications with the Colonial Office, I thought it inexpedient to formally and officially ask what aid the Imperial Government would be willing to render to the duplication of the Australian-Singapore line. The answer to such a request at the present time would, I believe, rather retard than promote a favourable result. In my opinion the time will come, and perhaps before very long, when the whole question of the cable communication between Great Britain and her colonies and dependencies will have to be considered; but I doubt if at present there is any advantage in pressing on the Imperial Government the Australian aspect of the question. There is, I think, a disposition to assist the Cape, and other South African possessions, to obtain cable communication, of which they have none at present. If the Australasian Colonies showed themselves exigent just now, they might stand in the way of the Cape arrangements, without benefiting themselves. On the other hand, supposing (which is of course not certain) anything were done for the Cape, the whole subject would be well ventilated in Parliament, and something like a precedent would be established which might hereafter be useful. At present South Africa, without any cable communication, has clearly the strongest case.

5. Meanwhile I have received through the Colonial Office an introduction to an officer in the India Office, for the purpose of obtaining from him information concerning the arrangements between the Indian Government and the Companies which, on either side of India, convey Australasian messages.

6. You will be interested to learn that the project of a line between Western North America and China has lately been carefully investigated. The result is that if such line were to run south of San Francisco it would involve an enormous risk, for the depth of the ocean in which it would have to be submerged exceeds in parts anything yet attempted with ocean telegraphy, and from such a depth it would be hopeless to expect to raise the cable in case repairs were needed. To the north, by the Aleutian Islands, the project is feasible, and an effort is being made to carry it out, but the chances of success at present are exceedingly doubtful. A line direct south, from San Francisco to New Zealand or Australia, is, I fear, not feasible, on account of the depth of ocean to which I have alluded. Connection with America would have to be made by communication being established between Australia and China, supposing a cable were carried from America north of San Francisco to Japan. This distant and possible eventuality should not, I think, interfere with the work, which is really urgent, of a duplicate system between the settled parts of Australia and Singapore.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

JULIUS VOGEL, Agent-General.

Enclosure 1 in No. 16.

UNDERSTAND Telegraph Conference sitting. Have not formally applied Imperial Government, but communications I have had lead me suppose no direct Imperial assistance available at present. Hope obtain all information respecting Indian Government system as far as it affects ours. Strongly advise complete duplication to Singapore, either from Normanton or North-West Cape.

VOGEL.

Enclosure 2 in No. 16.

VOGEL wishes you to tell New Zealand representative at Conference he has reason to believe Eastern Extension Company will make much more favourable terms if negotiated with.

2—F. 3.