

The Conference. it is well laid down, and we have taken various soundings, which show that it is on a better bottom. I think, therefore, it will last certainly more than five years before it breaks from abrasion; there may be other sources of injury, but that was the cause of its breakage last time.

13. In the event of a second cable being laid from Port Darwin, do you think a better line of route than the present could be found?—I do not think it is likely that a better route could be found. The line could not vary much—it must in any case be parallel to the present line.

14. Would it not be better to keep to the north of these islands, Timor, Sumba, and Baly?—I think not, from the fact that even now changes are frequently occurring among them from subterranean disturbances. Besides, the line would be longer, as it would have to wind through several groups of islands, a number of which are active volcanoes, where the water would be shallow, and there would be greater danger of injury to the cable.

15. I believe you have charge of the New Zealand cable?—Yes, of the whole cable.

16. Is that the same quality of cable as that which you would undertake to lay down to Port Darwin?—Yes, it is the same weight and make, and capacity of carriage.

17. How long has that cable worked?—Eleven months, and it is as sound as when it was laid down, and in better electrical condition.

18. A cable has better carrying capacity in deep water, has it not?—Yes.

19. *Mr. Burns.*] I suppose there are no means of avoiding coralline rocks in these seas?—No; the best line for the cable has been selected. There is a coralline sea near the coast of Western Australia, and so little is known of it that it requires to be surveyed.

20. *Mr. Anderson.*] Does not the quality of the sea for laying down a cable—that is to say, the character of the bottom—improve as you go farther westward?—I should think it must, because the water is deeper, and there is likely to be a softer bottom.

21. Then no survey of this sea was made before you commenced to lay the Port Darwin cable?—Yes; a series of observations had been made as far east as Rotti Island by the Dutch Government, and there were existing Admiralty surveys.

22. Was that done before the contract was taken to lay the cable?—I think so; the observations were taken, I believe, when the line was first projected, when the several routes were discussed, but I could not be certain.

23. *Mr. Ramsay.*] Have you considered the route from Western Australia to the Keeling Islands and thence to Ceylon?—Yes; I considered it when I read Mr. Robertson's circular letter.

24. What is your opinion of that route?—I think it would be a very long and a very expensive route.

25. *Mr. Fraser.*] Considering that the coast line from Western Australia would be 200 miles shorter than the other, taking one at 1,099 miles and the other at 900, and taking into consideration the fact that the route starting from Shark's Bay would be in deep water almost immediately from the coast, and would be, as we have every reason to believe, free from obstructing reefs, which line do you consider would be the most economical—that from Western Australia, or the line from Banjoewangie to Port Darwin; the only alternative being a line from some point on the north-west coast of Australia to Java and Batavia. Which line do you think would be the most economical in construction, the easiest to maintain in repair, and the most secure?—The shortest line, as it would effect a saving of 200 miles, would be more economical, and more easily worked. The maintenance would be the same in each case, as far as the length of cable is concerned. The shortest line would also possess the greatest advantages for communication.

26. But the line from the north-west coast of Australia to Java and Batavia would possess one great advantage—it would do away with all interference from the Dutch line at Java, and there would then be two lines of cable entirely in the hands of London proprietaries: there would be that advantage. I am not aware of the exact distance from the north-west coast of Australia to Batavia; do you know?—It is, I believe, 1,148 miles.

27. Eleven hundred and forty-eight miles from the north-west coast of Australia to Batavia, and 1,099 miles from Port Darwin to Banjoewangie?—Yes, I believe those are the distances shown on the charts.

28. *Mr. Griffith.*] Do you know anything of the seas extending from Copang to the Gulf of Carpentaria and its shores?—Yes, from having sailed over them, and from the charts.

29. Have they all been well sounded?—Yes, well sounded.

30. What sort of sea is it south of Timor going eastward?—From Timor for about 200 miles it contains coral reefs; after that there is a very good bottom, sand and mud all the way.

31. The 200 miles of coralline sea is open to the same objection which applies to the present route?—Yes, there is a coral bank along it.

32. And beyond that you think there is a good bottom?—Yes.

33. As far as Normanton?—Yes.

34. Supposing a line were made from Timor to Copang and to Queensland, then that would be the best route?—Yes, that would be the best water for a cable.

35. What is the sea like between Copang and Banjoewangie?—For some distance from Timor it would be necessary to go through a series of very small islands, where the bottom is rocky.

36. Is not that route very much the same as that adopted for the present cable?—Yes.

37. And the same kind of sea?—Yes, except near Copang, where the line would be adjacent to land for some distance off the north-west corner of Timor.

38. Is the difference in the bed of the sea appreciable between that and the present route—I am speaking of the route from Copang to Banjoewangie?—No, there is not much difference; if anything it is in favour of the present route; the other would bring the cable into shallower water.

39. *Mr. Fraser.*] I suppose if a line were laid from the north-west coast of Australia to Ceylon, by way of the Keeling Islands, it would be laid down in two parts; that would be more convenient than the direct route?—Yes.