

C. Todd, Esq.,
continued,
11th May 1872.

to the present Port Darwin line, which will be, no doubt, extended within a very short time as far north as Beltana, a distance of 350 miles north of Adelaide; thus duplicating the Port Darwin line on independent routes for a distance of 350 miles north of Adelaide.

379. *By Mr. Burns.*—Have you had many interruptions upon that section hitherto?—No, very few indeed; but our lines are more liable to interruption, as a matter of fact, in settled districts than in the interior; but upon that section I can tell you the whole number—we have had four in five years.

380. So that that duplication will be of very little practicable benefit as far as extra security is concerned?—Why?

381. If you have only four interruptions, you have very little to complain of?—I am very glad to hear you say so.—[*The witness handed in a return, vide Appendix No. 4.*]

382. *By Mr. Mein.*—In the earlier part of your evidence, you stated that one of the advantages of your overland route was that any other land line would be longer?—I did.

383. You were, of course, speaking from an Adelaide point of view then?—I am endeavoring to give you the exact facts, not from any particular standpoint.

384. We are speaking in the interests of all the colonies. Would it be shorter from Port Darwin by your route to Sydney than from Normantown to Sydney?—Nearly the same distance from Port Darwin to Sydney either *viâ* Normantown or *viâ* Adelaide.

385. How do you arrive at that—what are the comparative lengths?—It is 3,000 miles from Port Darwin to Sydney, and I think you will find it is very nearly the same—I have not measured the distance, but I think you will find it is very nearly 3,000 miles from Port Darwin *viâ* Normantown to Sydney.

386. You see the latitude of Normantown is eighteen degrees?—You cannot take latitude.

387. Assuming that you take two sides of a triangle?—I am taking it this way: you go from Normantown to Cardwell.

388. No, we do not?—Then you have put up additional lines. I remember measuring it some years ago. I took the telegraph distances given by your superintendent, and I went from Normantown to Cardwell and down the coast. What lines you have put up since I am not speaking of; you may have shortened the distance since.

389. You have mentioned about the South Australian line going over the dry interior of the continent. I believe it has flooded seasons, has it not?—The flooded seasons of the interior are of very short duration—the flooded seasons of the Northern Territory extend over about three months; but there is this difference: coming down as we do due south, we are very soon beyond the influence of the heaviest portions of the monsoons, and very soon out of the flooded country; that is the advantage of running north and south. It is a distance of 300 or 400 miles from Port Darwin when we come to the region where we have very little rain to trouble us, and very little flooded country.

390. You also mentioned that the overland route from Adelaide to Port Darwin was undertaken by your Government at your suggestion?—Yes; I advocated it as long ago as 1858; and you will see a despatch from Sir Richard Macdonnell to the Secretary of State, dated August 1859, in the Parliamentary papers of South Australia for 1861, in which I advocated a line being taken right across the continent; and from 1858 to the time it was erected I was continually bringing the matter before my Government.

391. Upon what grounds did you make the suggestion?—As the best line that the Australian colonies could carry out.

392. As a matter of fact, is not that the letter—[*handing a paper to the witness*—to your Government upon which your Government carried out that line?—Yes.

393. As a matter of fact, is not the letter from you dated the 18th April 1870 in the South Australian Parliamentary Proceedings, No. 24?—That is the letter upon which the Government of the day took action.—[*Vide Appendix No. 5.*]

394. If you will look at that letter, you will find, I think, that you recommended the Government to undertake this work upon these grounds:—“In view of the importance of telegraphic communication with your Northern Territory, and the desirability of opening the overland right through”?—That is one of the collateral advantages.

395. “Two. That such telegraph would do much to open up the Northern Territory”?—Yes; quite so. I was quite right in putting in all the collateral advantages.

396. And do you know within your own knowledge that the work was undertaken on international grounds or not?—I can hardly say what might have been the views of the Government. I should say, mixed. My own view was that, while we were serving the other colonies and ourselves in providing means for connecting Australia with Europe, we were at the same time, of course, forwarding our own interests by developing the resources of our territory.

397. And you knew at that time, did you not, that Queensland had entered into negotiations with the Telegraph Company for the purpose of constructing a cable terminating at Normanton?—I did not. I may say that Commander Noel Osborne, who was with me a great deal during his short stay in Adelaide, made no mention to me, as far as my memory serves me—and I am speaking from memory—of any engagement with the Queensland lines for meeting her lines. But he gave me to understand that the project of their company was this; to lay a cable to Port Darwin. He came to South Australia to seek permission to land a cable at Port Darwin, and to carry a land line from Port Darwin to Queensland; but not that he or his company were in any way bound to Queensland; that was only to form part of their project; and I pointed out, as I conceived it to be my duty to do, that it would be much better to carry out the idea that I had so long promulgated and advocated, of bringing the line directly through the interior.

398. *By Sir James Wilson.*—When was your line commenced, and when was it afterwards opened—on what dates precisely?—Our line was commenced at the end of August or beginning of September 1870 at the Port Darwin end, and at the beginning of October at the Port Augusta end; the central sections, of course, could not be begun so soon; and the line was completed in August 1872. It was not quite two years in course of construction.

399. *By Mr. Mein.*—You found it a much more costly work than was originally estimated?—That was entirely due to the break down of the contractors for the Northern Territory; our difficulties in the Northern Territory arose out of that. But I will say this: that the line from Port Augusta for 1,200 or 1,300 miles north—we made Port Augusta the base of operations for the southern end, and for 1,200 miles north—that portion of the line cost very little more than the original estimate. But you cannot add the cost of re-poling; it is absurd to add that to the cost of the line, for that has to be done upon every line.