

S. W. McGowan,
Esq.,
continued,
10th May 1878.

That is the present line to Normantown, and I do not think you would find more difficulty in carrying the line from Normantown to a point upon the Roper River than there was found from Normantown across.

258. *By Sir James Wilson.*—To intersect the main line—the trans-continental line?—Yes, precisely.

259. *By Mr. Cuthbert.*—You think that could be done for £55 a mile?—I estimate it at the cost of the northern lines of Queensland, if wooden poles are employed. Iron poles would be more expensive at first, but more economical eventually.

260. *By Mr. Mein.*—It would not be a complete duplication within Australia?—Nearly so, but there are very few interruptions upon the part from Point Darwin to the Roper. There the line would be only single.

261. *By Mr. Boucaut.*—May we lay down this proposition, that in proportion as the land the line is free from interruption and available for the transmission of messages so is the necessity for duplication diminished?—Yes, decidedly; for I say at present, as far as the amount of work is concerned, we do not require duplication at all. We have not sufficient work for one line.

262. *By Mr. Burns.*—It is only required for certainty of communication.—Yes.

263. *By the Chairman.*—Would that justify the outlay if this cable were as free from interruptions as in other parts of the world, and there were as great facilities for repairing it; though it is more frequently interrupted it would be better to bear the cost of repairs than to lay another one?—Yes; but you must bear in mind that, between Batavia and Singapore, the interruptions are very frequent indeed, and that cable is some years older than that between Banjoewangie and Port Darwin, and also the most serious drawback to the correctness of messages between Europe and Australia is owing to the imperfections of the working of the land line in Batavia, a want of knowledge of the language on the part of the operators and a want of certainty of the working of the land line independently of the cable; but that would be got rid of altogether by a cable between Banjoewangie and Singapore. In fact, I believe that if there be a new cable between Banjoewangie and Singapore the urgency of the duplication would be much reduced.

264. That is only about half?—Only about one-half. It must be remembered that between Banjoewangie and Batavia there are 480 miles of land line, and that land line is in tropical regions and worked under very great disadvantages.

265. It is proposed to avoid it altogether?—A cable between Banjoewangie and Singapore would completely avoid it, but they simply propose to maintain that cable by Batavia and Singapore as an alternative.

266. They propose to keep it in good working order?—Yes.

The witness withdrew.

W. J. Cracknell, Esq., examined.

267. *By the Chairman.*—You know the purpose for which the Conference is now sitting?—Yes.

268. That of the duplication of the cable. We have already had the evidence of Colonel Glover and Mr. McGowan, and your brother. The Conference thought you might wish to make any statement that may have occurred to you in considering the subject that may be of some benefit to them, and give them information?—I think a duplicate cable is absolutely necessary at the present time; and, if possible, I think that a competing line would be better than duplicating the present cable in order to reduce the rates.

269. A new company altogether?—A new company altogether.

270. Apart from that, supposing that there are difficulties in the way of obtaining a competing cable, have you anything to say in regard to the proposition made by the present Eastern Extension Company, with a view of duplicating their cable. Are you aware of the proposal which Colonel Glover has been authorized to make?—No, I am not aware of it.

271. Contained in Mr. Morgan's letter from South Australia?—I do not know it.

272. The proposal is to lay a new cable from Port Darwin to Banjoewangie, and from Banjoewangie to Singapore, avoiding the land line to Batavia?—I am not in favor of a duplicate cable upon the present route, and in the hands of the same company.

273. Will you state why you hold that opinion?—The monopoly would still be the same monopoly as exists at present, and there would be little or no chance of the charges being reduced. These companies of course are formed for the purpose of making money.

274. Have you any information with regard to the business, or any extension of the business, which would justify a competing line?—I believe if the charges were reduced one-half, say, that the business would be considerably increased.

275. You mean one-half of the whole charge?—Yes.

276. Of course you are aware that a large proportion of the charge goes to other companies?—Yes; but through rates to be reduced one-half.

277. Apart from that have you anything to tell the Conference in respect to the land line, the part that connects the whole of the colonies with Port Darwin; do you consider that satisfactory?—As far as it goes I think the line works admirably, considering the distance it traverses through unsettled country.

278. You would not think of duplicating that?—Most decidedly I would.

279. You would?—Yes. The cable should be brought—

280. On the ground of competition?—No, not competition with South Australia; the second line would be available when the Port Darwin line was interrupted.

281. Do you think that a second line would be content with taking what the Port Darwin line could not carry?—That depends upon circumstances. This suggestion is made in the event of the Conference deciding upon laying a second cable by the present route, as the most suitable method of duplicating the Australian land line. I have no objection to see the line extended from Port Darwin to Normantown, at the expense of the southern colonies. In that event we would be satisfied to take the business that South Australia likes to give us when their line is interrupted. I think Queensland has done enough already in extending the line to Carpentaria.

282. Then I understand you to mean that you think a second land line necessary?—Absolutely necessary.

W. J. Cracknell,
Esq.,
10th May 1878.