

up to a very recent date the Imperial authorities objected to bringing down any further information, and I am justified in saying, in obedience to that intimation, nothing further has been brought down. As to the question itself, no doubt the honourable leader of the Opposition and my honourable friend who has brought this matter under the consideration of the House are quite justified in saying that this is a very important enterprise, and under certain possible conditions it would probably be extremely desirable that the several parties concerned should take steps to bring it about. But as regards the people of Canada at large, with whom we are most concerned, while I am not disposed to say it is of no great consequence to them, I am disposed to say this: that of the three principal parties concerned they are, in my judgment, the least directly concerned. I think the great Australasian group beyond question are the most interested, and next to them, having regard to their enormous interests in the Pacific Ocean at large and in Australasia in particular, I think the Imperial authorities are most interested; and, while not disposed to deny that Canada has a distinct and material interest in promoting trade and commerce with the Australian Colonies, I think I am justified in saying that of the three parties we are the least interested, from a commercial point of view, at all events. Under these circumstances, and bearing in mind that Canada, in my judgment, has been called upon to contribute enormously in proportion to her resources to the building of a trans-continental railway across this continent, in regard to which I have always held the British Government ought to have contributed, and I think the honourable gentleman opposite, if I am not mistaken, was very much of the same opinion—

*Sir Charles Tupper.*—Hear, hear.

*The Minister of Trade and Commerce.*—It is no particular secret now that if we had been a little less precipitate in making an agreement for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway some thirty years ago, the British Government would have been compelled to have assisted largely in its construction. However, the whole burden fell on Canada. Canada, in carrying that out, in my judgment, rendered great service to the Empire, which has not been adequately acknowledged up to the present time, at all events, by the British Government. Under these circumstances, while I would not be disposed to refuse to take a reasonable share in this cable enterprise, I consider Canada should not be called upon to bear too large a proportion; and that, without entering into any very minute discussion to-night on the subject of the proposed cost and of the proposed revenue which may be obtained from various sources, we in this Dominion are justified in saying, both to the Australasian group and to Great Britain, that after all we should not be called on to contribute to it more than in accordance with our interest. Up to the present time the Government have not found it possible to come to an exact understanding with the other parties to the enterprise, although they have not abandoned the hope that negotiations may yet be carried out to a successful issue. I am not at the present time going to enter into any details about these negotiations, which would rather injure than promote the cause; but of two things the honourable gentleman opposite may rest assured: first, that we shall not lose sight of it; and, second, that we shall feel it our duty to see that Canada is not called upon to bear more than her proper proportion of the cost. It may prove, and I hope it will prove, when this matter is thoroughly brought before the Australian Colonies, and the proposal is placed before the people at Home, that the expectations formed by the gentlemen promoting this scheme are correct, there is reasonable hope that advances will speedily be made which will bring about the realisation of the honourable gentleman's desire. Up to the present moment, although these things are in the air, they are not fully crystallized, I am not in a position to come down to the House with any definite proposition on the subject. Moreover, though Canada is a country of great potential resources, the Dominion and this Government have undertaken a great many expensive operations up to the present moment, and our resources at this time, as we shall be reminded by speeches from honourable gentlemen opposite later on, are very fully engaged. I must say that we should be very careful in regard to entering into any immediate liability, although we may believe there is a reasonably good chance of being recouped within a moderate space of time. I do not want to deter any honourable gentleman who has taken an interest in the subject from giving the House and the Government the benefit of his views. Anything the honourable leader of the Opposition or his friends or our friends may choose to say will be carefully considered by the Government and receive due attention at their hands. We are not, however, in a position to bring down at this moment any suggestion as to the proportion of the enterprise we should undertake, and I hardly think it would be profitable to those who desire to promote this enterprise to enter into any discussion of that phase of the question. As to the general benefit that may follow, I do not dispute it. The only point I make is that, while it may be of interest to Canada, it is of very much more interest to the Australian group, whose inhabitants are wealthy people, quite as wealthy, and perhaps more so, than are Canadians as yet; and to the people of Great Britain, whose interest would be very largely served by having a second line of cable through British territory which would be practically inaccessible to any attempts that may be made by any foe at any time to interrupt communication.

*Mr. McNeill.*—I do not purpose to detain the House in reference to this matter, but I would like to call the attention of the honourable gentleman (Sir Richard Cartwright) to one fact in connection with the subject which he admits is one of very great importance, and that is that the emissaries of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company are at present hard at work in Australia doing all they can to induce the Australian Colonies to give up their intention of supporting this project, so that delay now will be exceedingly dangerous. I would also call the honourable gentleman's attention to the fact that the present time seems to be singularly appropriate for urging this question upon the attention of the Imperial authorities. When every one must be alive to the enormous importance of telegraphic communication from one point of the Empire to the other, I should imagine that this was a time, if ever, when an effort should be made to bring this question home with the greatest possible force to the Imperial Government. I find that, in a memorandum