

No. 154.

The Hon. the PREMIER, Wellington, to the Hon. the PREMIER, Hobart.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 5th February, 1900.

HAVE received cable from Premier, Queensland, stating, Sydney Conference, Queensland, Victoria objected definite reply being given Eastern Extension Company proposals until full information obtained from Pacific Cable Joint Board regarding probable effect of adoption of proposals on prospects Pacific scheme, and stating his concurrence in our views. He also states belief Victoria will concur. I hope Tasmania will concur and assist us as far as practicable in seeing nothing done prejudicial to Pacific cable.

No. 155.

The Hon. the PREMIER, Wellington, to the Hon. the PREMIER, Brisbane.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 5th February, 1900.

HAVE wired Premier, Tasmania, asking him fall in with our views respecting Eastern Company's offer.

No. 156.

The Hon. the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Brisbane, to the Hon. the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Wellington.

SIR,—

Post and Telegraph Department, Brisbane, 12th February, 1900.

Following upon my circular letter dated the 1st instant, drawing attention to the action now being taken by the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, with the view of inducing the Australasian Colonies to enter into a new agreement which would operate injuriously against the early accomplishment of the Pacific-cable scheme, I have now the honour to forward for your perusal copy of a report of the views held by the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce and communicated to me by a deputation which waited upon me on Saturday last.

I have, &c.,

JAMES G. DRAKE, Postmaster-General.

The Hon. the Postmaster-General, Wellington.

Enclosure 1 in No. 156.

THE PACIFIC CABLE.—DEPUTATION TO THE MINISTER, FROM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.—THE GOVERNMENT FIRM.

MESSRS. A. J. Carter (President), J. Leahy, M.L.A., J. Reid, J. Chapman, R. W. Thurlow, A. H. Chambers, J. Arthur, C. E. Bernays, and J. Macdonald represented the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce in a deputation which waited upon the Postmaster-General (Mr. Drake) on Saturday to discuss the probable effect upon the Pacific-cable scheme by the proposal of the Eastern Extension Company.

Mr. Carter said the deputation called with reference to the Pacific-cable scheme, and to ask how matters were going on, and what effect the action of New South Wales at the present time would have in retarding the development of the undertaking. Queensland had always been foremost in insisting upon the all-British cable, and had for the past twenty years been consistent in pointing out the advisableness of having such a line. It had been insisted that if the scheme were not adopted by others it would be a good and patriotic thing for Queensland to take it up alone rather than allow the question to drop. He believed the late Mr. Byrnes was of that opinion, and, further, that as a commercial speculation it would be of advantage to this colony. It was to be regretted that the Postmaster-General in New South Wales was imperilling the position when success seemed almost assured, and this Chamber was anxious that all possible pressure should be brought to bear upon the Government of New South Wales to force them back into the position they occupied some short time ago, as one of the consenting parties to the Pacific cable. As to the advisableness of such a cable, and the prospects of it paying, there was no doubt. The Eastern Extension Company, with their usual astuteness, had succeeded in drawing a herring across the trail in the shape of amended rates, which were very alluring, and it would require all the firmness possible to resist their cajoleries. The position had given rise to a good deal of indignation in England, as the many Press commentaries would show. At a meeting convened by the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, for instance, Sir E. A. Sassoon, M.P., said: "He had referred to the breakdown of the cable between Delagoa Bay and Mozambique—one of a system for which the proprietary company had received over £1,300,000 from the State in the shape of subsidies. This cable, although laid twenty years ago, had not been duplicated, and was interrupted from 21st October to 15th November last. A few days after its restoration came the news of another interruption of more than a week's duration between Aden and Zanzibar to another unduplicated cable, laid twenty years ago. Both of these were lines upon which they had to depend for the rapid transmission of news from the seat of war, and when these were interrupted they were only able to get news by the long land-line through Natal to Capetown, and so home along the west coast of Africa cables. Where they not entitled to ask to what uses those public funds, so lavishly supplied, had been devoted? Was it understood that these subsidies were to be applied, however indirectly, towards buying out or expropriating accessible land-lines in other parts of the world for the deliberate purpose of smothering and strangling competition, instead of being employed to keep the cables so freely subsidised in a state of efficiency