

in the main agrees with that of the gentlemen who appeared on behalf of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, whose views are adverse to the establishment of the proposed Pacific cable. The antagonistic evidence is voluminous. If examined, it will be seen that the gentlemen who submitted it are substantially of one mind on many subjects. The tone and substance of their observations leaves the impression that they do not look upon the Pacific cable as a necessary or desirable undertaking, and that if established as designed it would be inadequate in capacity and a heavy burden on the public exchequer. I could not venture here to take up the time necessary to refute the whole evidence."

Apparently these remarks are principally intended to apply to the preposterous estimate which is contained in a report dated 5th July, 1893, published in the "Proceedings" of the Ottawa Conference. Concerning this estimate Sir Sandford Fleming writes: "We have thus presented to us the estimate of the officers of the Post Office Department, amounting in all to £3,264,000. The Canadian Government has a *bonâ fide* tender to carry out in a complete and satisfactory manner precisely the same work for £1,517,000. What can be said of such a discrepancy as this? I entertain no doubt as to the great ability, the varied information, and the value of the services of these gentlemen. I can only regret that, in my extremely limited knowledge of them, I should be so unfortunate as to be driven to the conclusion that, however important the offices they fill, their importance does not make the occupants of the office infallible. In short, I am constrained to form the opinion that they have made a grave mistake, and that to this mistake, and to the unfortunate letter of Mr. Lamb in which it is contained, may be traced the seeming antagonism to a Pacific cable, which will be found in the evidence recently submitted."

That the adjective which we have used to describe this estimate is quite warranted will be at once admitted by any one with technical knowledge who reads the report in question. The mere suggestion that the core of the cable mentioned should have *equal* weights of copper and gutta-percha (940 lb. of each) is quite enough, without going further into the matter, to show that the report is utterly valueless. It is obvious that such a report as that above referred to, being officially circulated, must have had a most prejudicial effect as far as the Pacific-cable project is concerned. We also find that, as far back as September, 1888, in a minute on a letter from the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Lord Knutsford), the following occurs, above the signature of Sir Charles Todd, who was then, and still continues to be, Postmaster-General of South Australia: "In face of the known difficulties arising from coral reefs, and the enormous depth of the Pacific along the route proposed, estimated at 12,000 fathoms in some places," &c., &c. After this display of ignorance of a subject, on which his opinion is conveniently accepted by the Government of South Australia, it is not surprising to find in the same minute the following assertion advanced by Sir Charles Todd: "As the Government are aware, I have given this subject very great and careful consideration, more so, perhaps, than any one else." In all probability, the reference made by this Postmaster-General to the "enormous depths of the Pacific" can be traced to a blunder in the evidence given by another post-office official before the Colonial Conference of 1897. We cannot but attribute a handsome share of the misunderstandings and false reports to the delay in the survey of the Pacific-cable route, which was unanimously recommended by the delegates to the Colonial Conference held in London in 1887, and which is not yet completed. The Hydrographer (Admiral Sir W. J. Wharton) has in his report dated the 28th February, 1887, ten years ago (figures corrected to 1892), expressed himself as follows: "My general conclusion is that if the Government is to aid in a substantial manner any scheme for multiplying the lines of communication to Australia, it should be in the direction of triplicating, by means of sea-cables, those portions of the existing route which are now duplicated by foreign land-lines."

In view of such an opinion it is not surprising to find that the survey recommended by the Colonial Conference is of slow accomplishment. We may say here that when the Hydrographical Department of the United States undertook the survey for the American cable, soon to be laid from San Francisco to Honolulu, the work (about a third of that required for the Pacific-cable scheme) was very fully carried out in three months.

Besides these serious stumbling-blocks in the way of the Pacific cable, we must remember that in some of the Conferences held some of the representatives had no special or technical knowledge of the subject; thus we find that in the Colonial Conference in Ottawa, in 1894, the Hon. Thomas Playford, representing South Australia, emphatically asserts (and this after having been corrected!) that no soundings from San Francisco to Honolulu had been taken since 1887, which proved that he was quite uninformed of the very complete series of soundings taken by the United States Government in 1892-93 for the San Francisco-Hawaii cable, a matter vitally affecting the subject on which he was supposed to speak with intelligence.

Added to such misconceptions, arising from insufficient or incorrect information, we should not omit to say that the Australian Colonies have from time to time been quite satisfied with the reductions of rates which they have received, by using the leverage of proposing to support the Pacific cable; but that after each reduction they have ceased to interest themselves in the project. That the reductions were quite justifiable is proved by the steady increase in the revenue of the company concerned. For information regarding the financial position, revenue, &c., of the Eastern Extension Company, we refer our readers to an analysis made by Sir Sandford Fleming, which we published last week. In conclusion, we would express a hope that the allied companies will not be permitted in any way to close the doors on the progress of telegraph enterprise. Besides the large revenues derived from traffic, these companies, together with others in which they are interested, have already received in subsidies, guarantees, &c., a sum in excess of £3,000,000, and it would be extremely unwise to still further strengthen against competition the position of these "spoon-fed" monopolists.