

Sub-enclosure 1 to Enclosure in No. 102.

The PRESIDENT and the SECRETARY, Board of Trade, Ottawa, to His Excellency the GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF CANADA.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

Ottawa, 21st June, 1907.

The members of the Council, the present delegation from the Board of Trade of the City of Ottawa, desire to welcome Your Excellency back from England. They do so most cordially, and they trust they may be allowed to express the high gratification which your return to our midst gives to all classes of the community.

On behalf of the Board we ask Your Excellency to allow us to take advantage of this, the very earliest opportunity, to refer to some of the results of the Imperial Conference recently held in London. We desire especially to refer to the resolution adopted on the 14th May, which reads as follows:—

“That, in the opinion of this Conference, the interests of the Empire demand that, in so far as practicable, its different portions should be connected by the best possible means of mail communication, travel, and transportation, and that to this end it is advisable that Great Britain should be connected with Canada, and, through Canada, with Australia and New Zealand, by the best service available within reasonable cost; that for the purpose of carrying the above project into effect such financial support as may be necessary should be contributed by Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand in equitable proportions.”

This resolution was considered at the last sitting of the Conference. Its adoption was practically the concluding act of the assembled Prime Ministers, and this fact, we think, is of the highest importance in view of the far-reaching policy which the resolution may be taken to affirm. The resolution only mentions mail communications, but it is possible that the same wise policy may be regarded as applicable to other means of connecting the outlying portions of the Empire.

Modern communications between distant points on the surface of the globe are effected by the employment of two sister agencies—steam and electricity. The resolution of the Imperial Conference applies more particularly to the use of the first of these twin agencies, but the employment of the second is in no way antagonistic to that of the first; it may, indeed, be regarded in some cases as a consequence necessarily resulting from the use of the first. In the present instance, as both have the same end in view, every reason obtains why both should be employed in order the more speedily to accomplish an object so immensely important as the consolidation and well-being of the British Empire.

The proposition particularly referred to in the resolution is the establishment of a fast mail and passenger service between England and Australasia *via* Canada. The Board of Trade of the City of Ottawa, and, we may add, every Canadian, would rejoice to see this service carried out. As has elsewhere been truly said, it would benefit every province in the Dominion, and no one can doubt that it would tend in an important degree to knit together in friendship and in trade the several countries proposed to be connected.

Your Excellency is in part familiar with the labours of the Board of Trade of the City of Ottawa and its members. In 1901 they entered upon an inquiry of the greatest importance; they opened correspondence with every known organized body representing the interests of British trade in all parts of the world. From time to time they forwarded communications containing useful information having reference to the most effective means of fostering trade, stimulating commercial activity, and creating an electric bond of unity between the parts of the Empire separated by the oceans. They invited and received replies to the correspondence, and by such means they came into possession of the views of a large number of persons associated with British trade throughout the world.

One of the earliest expressions of opinion came from Australia. The General Council of the Australian Chambers of Commerce affirmed “the unspeakable importance of a system of State-owned telegraph and cable lines connecting all the several portions of His Majesty’s dominions.” The subject was brought up for discussion at the Fifth Congress of the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, held in Montreal in 1903, when the following formal resolution was adopted:—

“That, in the opinion of this Congress, all the self-governing British communities around the globe should be united by a continuous chain of State-owned telegraphs; that such an Inter-Imperial line of communication would, under Government control, put an end to the difficulty which has been caused in Australia by the allied cable companies, and remove all friction which has arisen between the partners in the Pacific cable; that it would lower charges to a minimum on oversea messages passing between New Zealand, Australia, India, South Africa, the West Indies, Newfoundland, Canada, and the Mother-country; that it would provide a double means of communication at low uniform rates between the Mother-country, or any one British State, and all self-governing British States; that it would constitute the most effective means by which the several governmental units of the Empire may hold communion with each other whenever they desire; and that, while it would be of the highest importance to the commercial and social interests of the British people around the world, it would, by the subtle force of electricity, at once promote the consolidation of the Empire and prove an indispensable factor in Imperial unity.”

This deliverance was reaffirmed by the Sixth Congress, held in London in 1906, with complete unanimity.

Having obtained similar expressions of opinion from many centres of political and commercial influence in both hemispheres, the Board of Trade of the City of Ottawa in 1904 issued a circular letter in which was submitted a scheme of Empire cables in complete harmony with the views of the Chambers of Commerce and the frequently expressed opinions of the British Empire