

15 June, 1911.]

CHEAPENING OF CABLE RATES.

[9th Day.

The PRESIDENT: Mr. Pearce, do you bring up the next resolution, as Mr. Fisher is not here?

Mr. PEARCE: Yes.

NATIONALIZATION OF THE ATLANTIC CABLE.

Australia:—

“That this Conference strongly recommends the nationalization of the Atlantic Cable in order to cheapen and render more effective telegraphic communication between Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand by thus acquiring complete control of all the telegraphic and cable lines along the ‘All-Red route.’”

New Zealand:—

“That, in order to secure a measure of unity in the cable and telegraph services within the Empire, the scheme of telegraph cables be extended by the laying of a State-owned cable between England and Canada, and that the powers of the Pacific Cable Board be extended to enable the Board to lay and control such cable.”

Mr. PEARCE: We bring up this resolution, Sir, because we think it is the only way in which we can achieve any beneficial results. Mr. Samuel pointed out in his speech that since this matter was first taken up some progress has been made, with the exception of the transatlantic cables. That we regard as the weak link in the chain, and the proposition we have before the Conference is to get this Conference to express an opinion as to whether that cannot be remedied. The present position is that the Pacific Cable is owned by the Governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. That is as far as Vancouver or Bamfield Creek, and then the Pacific Cable Board has obtained a lease of the land lines from Bamfield Creek to Montreal, but that land line lease expires within the next five years. That of course is being dealt with under another resolution, and I will not refer further to that, except to say that at present the control of the Pacific Cable Board extends practically from Sydney at the one end to Montreal in Canada. Then we come to a short length of land line, and then the cables across the Atlantic. To carry out the proposal to have an “All-Red” telegraph route from the United Kingdom to Australia and New Zealand *via* Canada involves the construction of a cable across the Atlantic and a land line across Canada to Bamfield, the Pacific Cable Board’s station on Vancouver Island in Western Canada. The route across the Atlantic may be either direct or *via* Greenland or Greenland and Iceland. The direct Atlantic cable would be more costly in point of construction than one taking either of the more northerly routes, but this advantage is more than compensated for by the lesser cost of working. The Atlantic line would also be more accessible for repairing, and have the merit of not touching on foreign soil.

I may say that the Pacific Cable Board has been furnished with estimates of the cost of constructing a direct line from Killala to Newfoundland, and lines *via* Greenland and *via* Iceland and Greenland. The length of line from Killala to Newfoundland is 1,844 miles; a line *via* Greenland would be about 2,350 miles, and *via* Iceland and Greenland, 2,560 miles. The cost of construction, however, owing to the difference in the material employed, would make the economy in prime cost of the cable *via* Greenland 64,000*l.* cheaper than the direct cable, and the one *via* Iceland and Greenland 100,000*l.* cheaper, in the one case representing an annual charge of 2,240*l.*, and in the other 3,500*l.* On the other hand, the Board’s engineers estimate that the working expenses *via* Greenland would be 6,000*l.* a year more than those by the direct route, and *via* Iceland and Greenland 12,000*l.* more, so that the excess in prime cost is more than compensated for by the cheaper working of the direct cable.