

15 June, 1911.] NATIONALIZATION OF THE ATLANTIC CABLE.

[9th Day.

Dr. FINDLAY—*cont.*

Mr. Fisher. I venture the opinion that the cable service presents an essentially different point of view to people living at our end of the world and to people living here. Our information of what is happening in the seat and centre of the Empire, and what is being done affecting and controlling us comes through the cable. You see nothing of us by cable; no man requires to spend very much time in reading the cable news from Australia or New Zealand in your daily papers here. On the other hand, every morning we rely upon our paper to tell us what has taken place in the heart and centre of the Empire, so the cable appeals to us as a national institution much more than it appeals to people in this country, and we deem it vital and important, not only to our commercial interests, but to our national interests. I would stress the observation made by Mr. Fisher, that we think this is too large a matter to be treated purely on a commercial basis—that it has a national aspect which transcends any question of commercial profit. It is one of those great public utilities out of which it is not advisable that private profit should be made. Whether it can be achieved now or achieved later, I feel sure that the feeling in Australia and New Zealand, and, I believe, in South Africa, is strongly in the direction of nationalizing means of communication such as a cable service. The point may want stressing because I take it that the policy point of view is different here to what it is with us. In this country the matter is viewed largely, I understand, from the point of view of commercial profit. We, increasingly, in New Zealand and Australia, look upon it more from a national point of view, and recognise that the cheapening of cable rates is essential to promote immediately and permanently Imperial unity. I simply repeat that we are much more dependent from any point of view of national importance upon our cables than you are, and consequently I agree with Mr. Pearce that we are anxious to have these means of communication nationalized so that they may be secured more fully to these oversea nations. I may add that I think we are indebted to Mr. Pearce for a definite and clear proposition, which is well elucidated by figures, and seems to me to be in every way worthy of consideration.

Sir D. DE VILLIERS GRAAFF: The first part of this Resolution has for its object the cheapening, so as to render more effective, of cable communication. It appears to me that again Mr. Samuel has anticipated our desire in this connection, for he has foreshadowed a Board of Control as to rates, and that, to my mind, is a great step in the right direction. Some of these licences for the landing of cables I understand fall in this year and next year, and, at any rate, within the next ten years all the licences will have fallen in, so that new arrangements could be made for the control of the rates, so that that part of the motion will be met without the State owning the cables. We in South Africa also grant licences for the landing of cables, and we make certain conditions in the event of a war as to what is to happen. If all the licences did not contain satisfactory clauses as to the position of the cables, or as to taking control during the time of war, it would not be a difficult matter to arrange for that, as the licences fall in from time to time, and new licences have to be granted. Nationalization of the cables may be necessary and may be desirable, but the question is, whether this is the right time in view of wireless telegraphy. I do not pretend to know as much about wireless telegraphy as Sir Joseph Ward, but it has certainly made great progress of late. We have established quite recently two installations, one is nearly completed now, and we have spoken 1,500 miles quite recently, and we hope that before long, when our installations are completed, and the ships trading between the Motherland and South Africa have their installations—one line, at any rate, has already installed it upon its ships—to be in a position to communicate with the Mother Country by wireless telegraphy whenever we think proper by passing it on from one ship to another. The chances are that there will be a biggish development in that direction, so I do not think that this is the right time to spend millions of money in buying up cables or laying submarine cables. I think the objection as to the rates will be met by the establishment of the Board of Control, and I think as to control in time of war the licences can contain clauses to that effect, and, at any rate, I should think it would be wise to hesitate a little