

16 June, 1911.]

ALL-RED ROUTE.

[10th Day.

Sir JOSEPH WARD—*cont.*

At the last Conference, on the 14th May, four years ago, a Resolution was carried "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. 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." The idea at that time was to have a fast service across the Atlantic and across the Pacific, giving connection between the Old Country—and I take New Zealand as the other extremity—in about 21 days. After the Conference had dissolved, on behalf of the Government of New Zealand I advised that we were prepared to support a service such as was suggested, which, I think, across the Pacific was then fixed at 18 knots an hour, and to give 75,000*l.* a year. So from the practical standpoint we came right along and did our part; but I understand difficulties supervened, from a financial point of view, that prevented the others doing what was necessary to enable that Resolution which I have just quoted being put into practical form. In the interval there has been a change in two important directions to which I want to allude. The existing service across the Pacific, which expires in July of this year, has been by Canada and New Zealand extended for a period of five years. At the moment Australia is not joining in that particular service, but I should very much hope to see them come into it later on. In considering this proposal now for an Atlantic service and an overland service through Canada and on across the Pacific to New Zealand, I feel it necessary to say that this Conference requires to recognise our obligations entered into across the Pacific by Canada and New Zealand for the existing service; and whatever may be done across the Atlantic, subsequently we would require to come into a faster service across the Pacific without in any way committing any breach of arrangement with the existing contractors as between Canada and New Zealand. That position presents itself, and I think it only right for me, in submitting the proposal in the Resolution I have before the Conference now, to make that position clear. In doing so I have no doubt that the existing Pacific contractors would do their part, in return for reasonable payment, to increase the speed across the Pacific.

Another important alteration which has taken place since the Resolution in 1907 was passed, and which to a very large extent would minimise and indeed overcome one of the principal objections to ensuring a fast service across the Pacific, is the fact that the difficulty of coaling at various points which was alluded to during the former discussion has now disappeared as far as the Pacific is concerned—that is, the certainty of using oil instead of coal; this would reduce the time between Vancouver and New Zealand, because the steamers would not require to spend the time which was formerly required for coaling at Honolulu and Fiji. With the facilities for obtaining oil, I have been assured by more than one representative shipping man that they could now give us a service across the Pacific of 20 knots an hour without any of the difficulties that presented themselves when this matter was before the Conference on the last occasion. So that in dealing with this matter now I find myself in the position of co-operating and supporting the All-Red route, which in the general interests of the oversea countries and Britain too is so very important. As far as the Pacific side is concerned, while recognising the obligations we have for the existing contract, I can urge the establishment of an All-Red service, and upon the expiry of the present Pacific contract (our present contractors might be disposed to enter into an arrangement to alter it of course) of availing ourselves of oil fuel with a view to having more rapid communication across the Pacific.

I want to say that in those two directions there has been an alteration since this matter was submitted to the Conference on the last occasion. I also take the opportunity of saying that I have been advised only by cable from New Zealand this morning—and this is a matter which Sir Wilfrid Laurier perhaps may allow me to say one word upon—that unless there is an alteration made in the time that the Canadian Pacific Railway Service is running mails and passengers across Canada now, a day's