

able to do more than formulate the general objects, without hampering the future consideration of the subject by resolutions to which later information, or special convenience, might be opposed.

For instance (to take the principal point), it was considered useless to attempt any exact estimate of the cost of the undertaking—the crucial question upon which all others depend—until a satisfactory survey of the route had been made. Your Lordship is aware that at the conclusion of the Colonial Conference of 1887, Her Majesty's Government was requested to make a survey of the route for the proposed cable. Her Majesty's Government declined to undertake a special survey of the route until there was some immediate prospect of the necessary funds being forthcoming for laying the cable. The Admiralty were, however, at the time contemplating a general hydrographic survey of the islands and dangers on the route from New Zealand to Vancouver, and H.M.S. "*Egeria*," which was commissioned for that purpose in 1888, was instructed to obtain deep soundings in the course of her work which would furnish information as to the varieties of depth to be expected on the general line of the cable. In 1890, however, these surveys had to be discontinued, when they had only extended as far as the Phoenix Islands, as the services of the "*Egeria*" were required for more pressing hydrographic work elsewhere. The long stretch of waters between Vancouver and the Sandwich Islands, or Fanning Island—the first link in the chain from the Canadian side—remains, for the purpose contemplated, virtually unexplored.

I should observe, in passing, that the discontinuance of the surveys was commented upon, and great disappointment was expressed by the delegates that the request of the Conference of 1887 had been so imperfectly met. It seemed, therefore, to the Conference sufficiently clear that the first step to be taken was a survey of the route, so that the depth and character of the ocean-bed should be ascertained, the position of the various islands fixed and their suitability as landing-stages determined.

With these considerations before them, the Conference passed the second of the above resolutions. Your Lordship will observe that, whereas in 1887 Her Majesty's Government were asked in effect to undertake the survey at their own cost, the Conference proposes that the expense should be borne in equal proportion by Great Britain, Canada and the Australasian Colonies.

The expense of the survey of the whole route, conducted by one vessel for a computed period of three years, has been estimated at home at £36,000. It was, however, the desire of the delegates that the survey should be made as quickly as possible, and that for that purpose two or more vessels should be employed simultaneously.

I do not know whether the expense would be affected by such an arrangement, but I presume that much of the work contemplated would eventually be done in the ordinary course by the vessels which are constantly being employed in making surveys under the direction of the Hydrographical Department of the Admiralty, and therefore that a considerable part of the proportion of the outlay which, under the resolution of the Conference, would fall to Her Majesty's Government would only anticipate future expenditure.

Her Majesty's Government will, I trust, give full consideration to the request; and I need only add that they alone of the parties to the Conference possess the vessels which are required for the purpose, and that much