

But he would not stand out, and his words are remarkable :—

“ At the same time my government wishes me to inform this Conference that if this cable is required for Imperial and for public purposes for the good of the Empire, South Australia is not going to stand in the way, and will support the cable. All we ask is this : That, if this cable is to be so subsidised by the various governments, our peculiar position shall be taken into account, and anything that we may lose by the construction of this new line of cable may be minimised as much as possible.”

The other representatives felt that South Australia should be indemnified against further loss, but it was not settled in that way.

Sir Henry Wrixon said : “ We Australian Colonies ask for the cable ; we earnestly desire it. We appreciate the increased advantage and the impetus to trade which would result from the laying of a Pacific cable, because there is no doubt whatever that a cable going through the Pacific, merely from the trade point of view, would be a great assistance and tend to promote trade. It would enable us to enter into trade negotiations with Canada and other places. What we are really anxious about, is the Imperial and national point of view. There is no doubt whatever that in case of war it might be worth the whole of what this cable is supposed to cost to the Empire and its dependencies, if we could for a week have prompt and immediate information as to the movements of an enemy ; and we know that with the present line of cable, in case of war, communication would be most likely interrupted almost immediately. Though a distant and far-lying portion of the Empire, we feel that we are part of the Empire, and we dearly like to be sure that in case of difficulty we have a safe and certain means of communication which we cannot have under the present telegraph system. We might be able to have the cable entirely on British soil and entirely in seas under the command of the English navy. We take that to be a matter of the greatest importance, and we are perfectly willing to contribute our quota.” He referred to the cable laid between Queensland and New Caledonia, and pointed out the danger, if the present scheme should prove abortive, of France making and owning a cable across the Pacific, the first link of which has already been laid. It will be seen, therefore, that the Australasian Colonies are most anxious to obtain this new cable communication.

Adverting to the opinion that a duplicate cable is essential to the proper working of the communication, I must add that it would add very largely to the initial cost, and that its consideration can well be left till the present scheme has assumed a more definite shape.

Great stress was laid upon the value of the line for Imperial purposes, but the question of the strategical value of the line must be decided by experts. Diverse opinions appear to have been expressed by various authorities, and I am not qualified to join in the controversy.

I will only remark that I cannot understand how two different routes, one eastern, the other western, joining Great Britain and her Australasian Colonies, can fail at critical moments to be more useful than one ; and that it is a not unreasonable proposition that a cable, passing solely through British territory and waters comparatively secure from attack, must give greater strategical advantages than lines which pass through European or Egyptian territories, with their constant liability to warlike complications.