

The Hon. Dr. COCKBURN: Well, it appears to me that this raises difficulties which will be found to be great impediments in the future, and surely the idea is not that by laying a new cable the concert of Australia in telegraphic affairs is to be destroyed. I presume the Pacific cable will be looked to as serving jointly the interests of all Australasia, and that all the Colonies would like to have a share, but if it is understood that Tasmania, for example, was to join equally with the other Colonies, you set down a principle which at once and for ever debars her taking any possible part in such an undertaking. And I do not think this should be done.

The Hon. Mr. COOK: I tell you what; we will leave out this question of the transcontinental line—that is your own affair. Let us start free of it, and then we might agree to the population basis.

The Hon. Dr. COCKBURN: My argument is that in all these matters Australia should be one—not divided in interest. Then, is it not a mistake to lay down a principle which for ever precludes the possibility of their being one? Our case is a special one, but that does not entitle us to less consideration.

The Hon. Mr. COOK: It does not govern future action at all, if it is to be a special one.

The Hon. Dr. COCKBURN: I am not talking on behalf merely of South Australia, but of all the other Colonies.

The Hon. Mr. COOK: If it is a special matter it does not govern future action at all.

The Hon. Dr. COCKBURN: But it is a precedent as to the manner in which other Colonies are to join in action.

The Hon. Mr. REEVES: I think it is *apropos* of this that I ought to tell the Conference of a communication I got from my Government this morning. I cabled to Mr. Ward yesterday, as I said I would, with regard to the terms on which New Zealand could come in as a contributing Colony. He replies that of course it would be very disadvantageous to us to come in on an equally responsible footing with the other three Colonies; at the same time he would be prepared to give way, and do so, annexing, however, the stipulation that Victoria and New South Wales should join with us in facing any possible loss on the present cable.

The Hon. Mr. DUFFY: Thank you.

The Hon. Mr. COOK: It would not take us—me at any rate—very long to decide that matter.

The Hon. Dr. COCKBURN: You are making tremendous difficulties.

The Hon. Mr. DUFFY: There is no chance of Victoria coming in at all, unless on an equally responsible basis. (Long pause.)

The Hon. Mr. COOK: Well, that raises the whole question again.

The Hon. Dr. COCKBURN: It is the largest question that has ever been raised in any federal undertaking.

The Hon. Mr. REEVES: I did not know what communications passed between the three gentlemen, or any representative of theirs, who met in Sydney and our Government in regard to this Conference, but when I left, Mr. Ward did not think this would come up, so he naturally sent me here without any information on the point. He told me distinctly the Conference was going to discuss two points: the cable route and the appointment of delegates. I came really expecting that the Conference would address itself to these two points, not on this contribution matter. I wired last night to Mr. Ward. That is how the matter stands.

The Hon. Mr. COOK: We stand in this position. Both Victoria and New South Wales came into this project, not because there was any intense feeling throughout the community that we ought to, or to gain any pressing commercial advantages. In that respect we are different from both Queensland and New Zealand. We came in without stipulation or reservation of any kind, and I do not see that the Colonies more directly interested should raise all these objections, trying to saddle the two older Colonies who are coming in purely on federal lines, for international purposes, with unequal responsibilities. I think we ought to meet fairly.

The Hon. Mr. DUFFY: My Government will have the same difficulty in this matter. We do not care two straws whether the cable is constructed or not, we come into it with a patriotic sentiment and a federal idea. It may benefit the whole of Australia, but we have a very fair cable service at present, efficiently conducted and not much too dear. Nevertheless, we are willing to come into this project on a fair basis, that is an equal one. Dr. Cockburn mentions Tasmania—well, it might fairly be made an exception, it is a little place outside Australia altogether, its telegrams are of little value—a few hundreds of pounds—so I think we might make it a negligible quantity altogether. But as far as the grown-up Colonies are concerned, it should be a *sine qua non* that they should enter on equal terms. We are entering on a large commercial and industrial undertaking, which we hope will be a success. We do not speak to Great Britain and Canada about a population basis, but of equal shares. I think we might fairly say, as Queensland has generously waived any claim to the idea of a population basis, and has offered to take her fair burden the same as the other Colonies, that South Australia should take the same view. I never dreamed New Zealand would want anything else; we are making her special concessions on account of her geographical position, but we never dreamed she would hesitate about coming in on equal terms. Dr. Cockburn's position is difficult, but I hope, as we are meeting here to deal with the matter fairly, and let us say generously, that he will see his way to see with us in the matter. It should not, and need not, form a precedent. (Dr. COCKBURN: That is always said, "it will not form a precedent.") Victoria has had little consideration in the past, and I think we are entitled in these days to a little fair play. Let some of the other Colonies help us a little bit.

The Hon. Dr. COCKBURN: I do not want the impression to gain either here or anywhere else that any difficulties are being raised by me, or any attempt being made to saddle the larger Colonies with anything unforeseen. It appears to me that it is the other way, this is something altogether new: it is not raised by South Australia or New Zealand, but by others, and it is altogether new to us, and it must be confessed that nothing of this sort has ever been mentioned directly or indirectly at any previous conferences, on this subject. I do not know whether it was mentioned, or even hinted at, in Canada.

The Hon. Mr. THYNNE: I do not think any discussion ever took place between the representatives of the Colonies as to any question of proportion. Perhaps Dr. Cockburn will allow me to say that this matter has come up in one or two different forms. In the first place, my Premier, Mr. Nelson, after thoroughly investigating all the information he could get about the Pacific cable, went so far as to advise his own Parliament that if the other Colonies did not co-operate, to take the responsibility of the whole third. (Dr. COCKBURN: The whole third?) Yes; and when we came to discuss the matter privately with Mr. Duffy and Mr. Cook, I stated on behalf of Queensland that we were prepared to take any reasonable part
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