

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 30 JANUARY, 1877.

PRESENT :

<i>New South Wales</i>	... The Honorable John Robertson.
	... The Honorable Alex. Stuart.
	... The Honorable J. F. Burns.
<i>New Zealand</i> The Honorable G. McLean.
<i>Queensland</i> The Honorable Samuel Walker Griffith.
	... The Honorable Charles Stuart Mein.
<i>South Australia</i> The Honorable Sir Henry Ayers, K.C.M.G.
	... The Honorable Ebenezer Ward.
<i>Tasmania</i> The Honorable James Whyte.
<i>Victoria</i> The Honorable R. S. Anderson.
	... The Honorable R. Ramsay.
<i>Western Australia</i> The Honorable Malcolm Fraser.

THE HONORABLE JOHN ROBERTSON, COLONIAL SECRETARY, NEW SOUTH WALES,
IN THE CHAIR.MR. WILLIAM GREGOR TAYLOR, Superintendent and Electrician in charge of New Zealand Cable, called in
and examined.

Mr. W. G. 1. *By Sir Henry Ayers* : Will you have the goodness, Mr. Taylor, to inform the Conference what is your opinion of the relative value of a cable to be laid from Singapore to Thursday Island, near Cape York, and one from Singapore, south of the present line to a point somewhere near Port Darwin? Do you mean that it should pass through the Strait of Sunda?

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2. My object is to obtain your opinion of the relative value of the two routes, the one coming to Port Darwin by Banjoewangie, and the other to Thursday Island? I should say very strongly that a line coming to Port Darwin would be the most favourable; first, as being shorter, and because the line south of Singapore is now in fair order. There is a fair sea approaching Banjoewangie, and from Banjoewangie to Port Darwin the cable is in good order now. The greater portion of the first section is in deep water, and from Banjoewangie to Port Darwin the sea is well known and has been surveyed; whereas a line from Singapore south of Macassar to Thursday Island would be too long a section to be worked in one piece. The sea to the south of Borneo and Macassar has a very coralline bottom with shallow water, and would be unfavorable for a cable.

3. *By Mr. Burns* : What would be the difference in point of expense? I am not prepared to answer that now.

4. Can you give us the difference in the matter of distance? I suppose about 800 miles.

5. *By Sir Henry Ayers* : Which line in your opinion would be the best as a duplicate line to Singapore, having regard both to the longevity of the cable and the cost of construction and maintenance? A line from Singapore to Banjoewangie and Port Darwin would be the best of any line that could connect these two points, for the simple reason that any other line in any other direction must be in a coralline sea with shallow water, and through seas imperfectly surveyed.

6. Have you any knowledge of the sea between Banjoewangie and the North-west Cape? None whatever. There have never been any surveys there.

7. *By Mr. Fraser* : The distance from Nicol Bay to Banjoewangie is about 800 knots? I think it is more than that.

8. *By Mr. Mein* : Have you any practical knowledge of the waters you have referred to? Yes; five years ago I was electrician with the contractors, and was on board their ships while the cable was being laid, and last year I was sent in the steamer "Edinburgh" in charge of the work of repairing the cable by the Eastern Extension Company.

9. And you have naturally directed your attention to that route? Yes.

10. So that you are not competent to pass an opinion on the other route, not having examined it? I feel that I may form an opinion on the subject from the soundings that are given on the chart, from the surveys that have been made, and from my general knowledge of the nature of the sea among these islands. I have given my opinion from the observations I have made and from my general knowledge.

11. *By Mr. Ramsay* : I believe you were engaged in repairing a portion of the cable on the occasion of the last break? Yes, we were engaged in repairing it from the 1st April to the 7th August.

12. From the experience you have gained during that time, from the improvements effected, and from what you have seen of its working, do you think the present cable is likely to be durable? Yes, I think it is likely to last much longer without interruption than it has hitherto done. It is less likely to be injured by abrasion from the rocks, which was the cause of the break in April last, which occurred in shallow

shallow water. We have now reversed the cable and laid it in the deepest water available, and out of the reach of the coralline reefs. The present cable is a better one than the last, it is well laid down, and we have taken various soundings which show that it is on a better bottom. I think therefore it will last 80 Jan. 1877. certainly more than five years before it breaks from abrasion; there may be other sources of injury, but that was the cause of its breakage last time.

13. In the event of a second cable being laid from Port Darwin, do you think a better line of route than the present could be found? I don't think it is likely that a better route could be found. The line could not vary much—it must in any case be parallel to the present line.

14. Would it not be better to keep to the north of these islands, Timor, Sumatra, and Baly? I think not, from the fact that even now changes are frequently occurring among them from subterranean disturbances. Besides, the line would be longer, as it would have to wind through several groups of islands, a number of which are active volcanoes, where the water would be shallow, and there would be greater danger of injury to the cable.

15. I believe you have charge of the New Zealand cable? Yes, of the whole cable.

16. Is that the same quality of cable as that which you would undertake to lay down to Port Darwin? Yes, it is the same weight and make, and capacity of carriage.

17. How long has that cable worked? Eleven months, and it is as sound as when it was laid down, and in better electrical condition.

18. A cable has better carrying capacity in deep water, has it not? Yes.

19. *By Mr. Burns:* I suppose there are no means of avoiding coralline rocks in these seas? No; the best line for the cable has been selected. There is a coralline sea near the coast of Western Australia, and so little is known of it that it requires to be surveyed.

20. *By Mr. Anderson:* Does not the quality of the sea for laying down a cable—that is to say, the character of the bottom—improve as you go further westward? I should think it must, because the water is deeper, and there is likely to be a softer bottom.

21. Then no survey of this sea was made before you commenced to lay the Port Darwin cable? Yes; a series of observations had been made as far east as Rotti Island by the Dutch Government, and there were existing Admiralty surveys.

22. Was that done before the contract was taken to lay the cable? I think so; the observations were taken, I believe, when the line was first projected, when the several routes were discussed, but I could not be certain.

23. *By Mr. Rawson:* Have you considered the route from Western Australia to the Keeling Islands and thence to Ceylon? Yes; I considered it when I read Mr. Robertson's circular letter.

24. What is your opinion of that route? I think it would be a very long and a very expensive route.

25. *By Mr. Fraser:* Considering that the coast line from Western Australia would be 200 miles shorter than the other, taking one at 1,000 miles and the other at 900, and taking into consideration the fact that the route starting from Shark's Bay would be in deep water almost immediately from the coast, and would be, as we have every reason to believe, free from obstructing reefs, which line do you consider would be the most economical—that from Western Australia or the line from Banjoewangie to Port Darwin; the only alternative being a line from some point on the north-west coast of Australia to Java and Batavia. Which line do you think would be the most economical in construction, the easiest to maintain in repair, and the most secure? The shortest line, as it would effect a saving of 200 miles, would be more economical, and more easily worked. The maintenance would be the same in each case, as far as the length of cable is concerned. The shortest line would also possess the greatest advantages for communication.

26. But the line from the north-west coast of Australia to Java and Batavia would possess one great advantage—it would do away with all interference from the Dutch line at Java, and there would then be two lines of cable entirely in the hands of London proprietaries: there would be that advantage. I am not aware of the exact distance from the north-west coast of Australia to Batavia; do you know? It is, I believe, 1,148 miles.

27. 1,148 miles from the north-west coast of Australia to Batavia, and 1,000 miles from Port Darwin to Banjoewangie? Yes, I believe those are the distances shown on the charts.

28. *By Mr. Griffith:* Do you know anything of the seas extending from Coopang to the Gulf of Carpentaria and its shores? Yes, from having sailed over them, and from the charts.

29. Have they all been well sounded? Yes, well sounded.

30. What sort of sea is it south of Timor going eastward? From Timor for about 200 miles it contains coral reefs; after that there is a very good bottom, sand and mud all the way.

31. The 200 miles of coralline sea is open to the same objection which applies to the present route? Yes, there is a coral bank along it.

32. And beyond that you think there is a good bottom? Yes.

33. As far as Normanton? Yes.

34. Supposing a line were made from Timor to Copang and to Queensland, then that would be the best route? Yes, that would be the best water for a cable.

35. What is the sea like between Copang and Banjoewangie? For some distance from Timor it would be necessary to go through a series of very small islands, where the bottom is rocky.

36. Is not that route very much the same as that adopted for the present cable? Yes.

37. And the same kind of sea? Yes, except near Copang, where the line would be adjacent to land for some distance off the north-west corner of Timor.

38. Is the difference in the bed of the sea appreciable between that and the present route—I am speaking of the route from Copang to Banjoewangie? No, there is not much difference; if anything, it is in favor of the present route; the other would bring the cable into shallower water.

39. *By Mr. Fraser:* I suppose if a line were laid from the north-west coast of Australia to Ceylon, by way of the Keeling Islands, it would be laid down in two parts; that would be more convenient than the direct route? Yes.

40. Of the two lines—by Banjoewangie to Java, and the direct line from the North-west Cape to Batavia, which do you think would possess the greatest advantages for good working? So little is known of the ocean bed between the north-west coast of Australia and the westerly point of Java that I could hardly tell you.

Mr. W. G.
Topley.

Mr. W. G. 41. I suppose you are aware that the heavy currents on the north-west coast only extend a certain distance from the land, and do not come within the direct line. That would be an advantage, as the cable would be less liable to injury? There would not be much fear of injury to the cable, when it was once laid—on 20 Jan., 1877. a soft bottom it would be comparatively free from danger.

42. Is there a soft bottom between Port Darwin and Banjoewangie? It is some distance from it. You have the same coral reef bank, then you get into deep water, which lasts until you approach Banjoewangie, when the water shallows again.

43. I see it is here [referring to papers]. "With regard to the duration of cables no actual experience exists, nor indeed will it be found uniform, as it must depend upon the surroundings in each individual case. In the experience of the cable between Singapore and Australia, passing as it does through shallow and warm seas teeming with animal life, and judging from the experience we have had of the damage to which our present cable is exposed to attack from insects, it is considered fair to estimate the duration of a cable in these seas at about fifteen years." I merely quote that to ask if you can give any opinion as to whether the condition of the cable would be better if it were laid further to the westward, away from the coral line reef, which, I am given to understand, is destructive to it? From the appearance of the sea further to the westward, I should say the water was deeper and quieter.

44. I have been informed that the water is much deeper and altogether free from corals reefs. Well, the route from Batavia to North-west Cape would be better for the cable, as it would last longer, lying in deep water and on a soft bottom? Yes.

45. *By Mr. Stuart*: That is, if the water is deeper; but you know nothing of it? No.

46. *By Mr. Griffith*: Supposing you proceeded to lay down a duplicate line from Banjoewangie to Port Darwin, how far would that line be from the present cable? About twenty miles south of the present cable.

47. Would that be a sufficient distance to enable you to distinguish between the two lines in case of repairs being necessary? Yes, I think I am safe in saying it would be quite sufficient. There are four cables across the Atlantic joining the same points.

48. Would there not be danger, if there were two lines laid down on the same route, of taking up a sound cable instead of a broken one? No, the lines would be too far apart for that. No such danger is apprehended in connection with these Atlantic Cables all belonging to one Company. There are also two between Malta and Alexandria, two in the Red Sea, besides a duplicate now being laid between Aden and Bombay.

49. Your Company depend upon cables all the way from Australia to London, do they not? Yes, except across Java and India.

50. Supposing one of your cables broke, you have only a single line from Singapore to England? From Bombay to England the line belongs to the Eastern Telegraph Company, who work amicably with us, and the lines are double from Aden to England; the double line is not quite finished from Bombay to Aden.

51. But in the event of interruption, is there any other route? Yes, the Indo-European lines are available.

52. *By Mr. McLean*: If your line fail they will send a message for you by arrangement? Yes.

53. Then you have to depend upon other Companies? Yes; Companies with which we have a mutual working arrangement.

54. *By Mr. Brower*: I understood you then to say that the Eastern Extension Company works co-operatively with the Eastern Company? Yes.

55. And that the Eastern Company work entirely with cables which go from Plymouth, Alexandria, Aden, and Bombay? Yes.

56. And that this Company's cables have been duplicated between Aden and England, and are being doubled between Aden and Bombay? Yes.

57. So that when this line is completed there will be a complete double communication from Singapore to England by cable? Yes, when a line projected from Penang to Rangoon is laid.

58. If it is carried out? Yes.

59. Then the chances of a complete stoppage are very remote? Yes.

60. And supposing line were brought from Singapore to the N.W. Cape, that would of course effect a communication with the same system of telegraph lines, and there would be two distinct lines of communication right through? Right through from Australia to Europe.

61. *By Mr. Griffith*: Are submarine cables liable to interruption from other causes than abrasion by rocks? Yes, from a small flexible insect, known as teredo, which is said to bore into the gutta-percha.

62. Are they liable to disturbing influences from electric causes—from thunderstorms? No.

63. Or from volcanic influences? No, from nothing of the sort, as far as my experience goes.

64. Has volcanic action in the vicinity of a cable ever been known to affect it? Not that I am aware of.

65. *By Mr. Stuart*: Are you a practical telegraphist? Yes.

66. I mean specially in respect to construction? Yes. I have been engaged in the construction of the Atlantic cable. I was for some years in the service of the construction Company who made the Atlantic and all the Eastern cables, and afterwards was engaged in similar work for the Eastern Company. My position here is that of superintendent in charge of the New Zealand section and of the Eastern Extension Company's cable.

67. *By Mr. Raway*: Another route has been mentioned in Melbourne and submitted to the Chamber of Commerce there—from West Australia to the Mauritius; have you considered that route? Yes. I have seen plans of it, but I think it is impracticable; it is too long a section to work with any degree of accuracy; it is about 3,000 miles.

68. *By Mr. Anderson*: That is not longer than some of the American cables? The longest section of American cable is under 2,400 miles, from Brest in France to St. Pierre in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

69. *By Mr. Raway*: Are you aware of any action that has been initiated for the establishment of a line of telegraph between the Mauritius and Aden? I am not. I know it was spoken of some time ago.

70. Is there any immediate probability of its construction? I think not.

71. *By Mr. Fraser*: I have heard that in the Cape Colony a motion has been set on foot to obtain direct communication between the Cape and St. Helena, and Ascension Islands? It was discussed about three years ago, but I have heard nothing of it since. They were anxious for it at that time, and applied to the Home Government to assist them, but that was refused, and the matter fell through.

72. And a further extension from the Cape to the Mauritius was included in the proposal? Yes.

Mr. W. T.
Taylor.

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73. In such a case a line from West Australia to the Mauritius would secure complete communication to Europe via the Cape, apart from the line to these islands? Yes, if that line were constructed.

74. Are you of opinion that it would be practicable to carry out that line? It would be most difficult.

75. It is not longer than from America to England? Yes, it is; 1,800 miles is the greatest length of cable from America to British shores—from Valentia to Trinity Bay, Newfoundland.

76. And you are distinctly of opinion that a continuous line of 3,000 miles would be impracticable with present appliances? Not impracticable, but difficult.

77. *By Mr. Barnes:* You would not rely upon the working of a line of that length? No; it would be more difficult to work and more expensive; it would be much better to be interrupted at some point.

78. *By Mr. McLennan:* Have you any knowledge of the working of the present line, from Singapore to Banjoewangie? Yes.

79. Which is the worst portion of that line? The Dutch line from Batavia to Banjoewangie.

80. That would be entirely avoided by laying the cable from Singapore to Banjoewangie? Yes.

81. Do you apprehend any difficulty in laying down a line from those points? No.

82. What appliances have you at present for repairing the cable in case of a break between these points? A vessel fully equipped for cable work is always laying at Singapore when not required elsewhere.

83. Would not the same appliances be more effective for repairs on a double line than on a single line? No, they would be equally available.

84. Would not the shorter distances from point to point render them more effective for repairing? No, because the vessel steams to a certain point marked on the chart, where the repair is effected.

85. *By Mr. Menz:* Would your Company have any difficulty in establishing a line between Sourakaya and Copang and Torres Straits? I presume not; the only difficulty would be that it would be liable to interruption.

86. That difficulty would apply to both sections? Yes.

87. Would there be any difficulty first in constructing and then in maintaining in working order a line between those points? No, I do not see any difficulty.

88. And the appliances you possess for repairs would be as effective and convenient for that line as for any other? Yes, except that there might be more work for one vessel.

89. *By Mr. Rowley:* What better provision have you now for keeping the present line in working order than you had when the last breakage occurred? None; we have just the same provision—two vessels.

90. How long was the cable out of use at that time? From April 24th to August 7th, which was a most unfortunate period, as at that time there were three sections of the Company's cables down.

91. I wish to know whether you are in a better position now for keeping the line in good working order than you were then? No; we are exactly in the same position that we were in a year ago when the last break occurred.

92. Then the same thing might occur again at any time, and communication be interrupted for three or four months? Yes; it is possible, certainly.

93. *By Mr. Griffith:* Do you know how far apart from each other are the Atlantic cables belonging to the same Company? No, I do not.

94. What would be the cost of keeping an extra vessel at Port Darwin, besides the one at Singapore? The "Edinburgh" when in port costs us about £500 a month for crew and port charges, with the costs of additional hands when she goes to sea; and then there is a percentage on the value of the policy of insurance.

95. What is your own opinion—that it would be cheaper to keep a second vessel at Port Darwin, or to subsidize another line? That would depend upon whether the vessel was frequently required at sea. The expenses in port would be £6,000 a year, but it would be more when she went out to sea.

96. What would be the additional cost of each trip? That would depend entirely upon the length of the trip.

97. What would be the cost of a cable from Banjoewangie to Port Darwin? I am not empowered to make any estimate beyond the figures given in our Chairman's circular.

98. The cost of the ship stationed at Singapore, you say, is £500 a month? Yes, about that when lying in port; I cannot give you a very close estimate.

Mr. SAMUEL KNEVETT, Agent for Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, called in and examined.

Mr. Samuel
Knevett.

99. *By Mr. Fraser:* I wish to know, Mr. Knevett, if you can give me any information with reference to a proposition submitted I believe by your Company. Mr. Barlee, who was Colonial Secretary in Western Australia, writing to Governor Robinson says:—"With the Chairman of the Eastern Extension Company, and with Colonel Glover, R.E., the Managing Director, I have had interviews, and I am in a position to say that a scheme in every way beneficial to Western Australia will in the course of a few days be submitted by the Company. That scheme is roughly as follows:—To lay one cable from Singapore to Banjoewangie, and a second from thence to the North-west Cape in Western Australia. These cables to be worked by the present staff of the Company, and with no foreign interference in the transmission of messages. The cost of these cables is estimated at £400,000, and the Company argue with some reason, that as the business transacted by the cables now in operation is not sufficient to keep the staff at work more than two hours a day, and does not pay, it is only reasonable that if the Australian Colonies insist on the luxury of a second cable they should contribute towards the cost of it. It is therefore proposed that the interest on £400,000 to be raised in England, should be guaranteed by the Australian Colonies, with such addition as may be needed for a sinking fund for (say) a period of fifteen years. The Company could not raise this money in England (so they say) on their own responsibility under 6 per cent., but I pointed out that if the Colonies are asked to guarantee the interest, that guarantee would ensure the raising the money at 4 per cent. Assume that £30,000 per annum be required. Such sum divided among the several Colonies in proportion to their population would be no heavy burden on any Colony, and would certainly fall lightly on Western Australia. The Company contemplates that the cables could be ready for work at the expiration of one year from the date on which a contract was signed." I have read that letter with the object of asking you whether the Company have accepted the proposition. I want to learn, if possible, whether this proposal has been put in definite form? I think not. Colonel Glover told me he had seen Mr. Barlee, but I think nothing came of it, except the proposition which the Company had already made, to lay down a cable for £540,000.

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Mr. Samuel
Knevels

100. This letter is dated 31st August, 1876? Yes, but since then there has been Mr. Pender's memorandum on the subject.

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101. But nothing further on these two points? Nothing.

102. *By Mr. Ward:* Do you know anything personally of the working of the cable at Singapore? No. Captain AUDLEY COOTE, representative of Messrs. Siemens Brothers, and of the Indo-Australian Telegraph Company, called in and examined.

Captain A.
Coote

103. *By Mr. Meiss:* I believe, Captain Coote, you are the representative of a Company interested in the establishment of telegraphic communication between Europe and the Colonies? Yes, the Indo-Australian Telegraph Company.

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104. Have you directed your attention to duplicate telegraph communication between Singapore and the Colonies? I have.

105. Have you considered the practicability of the different routes? Yes.

106. What direction have your inquiries taken? Chiefly from the shores of Queensland to Singapore.

107. In what way? In interesting myself in the soundings, and in having always thought it to be the best route to take for a duplicate cable to connect Australia with Europe, provided it did not go up as far as Celebes.

108. Have the seas there been sufficiently explored to enable you to say authoritatively whether a line constructed there would be practicable? Yes.

109. In what direction? Keeping south of Timor, starting from a point in Queensland, either Normanton or Cape York, touching at Timor, and going through this passage (*indicating localities on map*) known as the Strait of Lombok, to Singapore, between the Island of Borneo and Biliton Island. Captain Nares, of H.M.S.S. "Challenger," informed me that the line shown on the map, as a dotted line, would pass over an exceedingly deep and uneven bottom, caused by the waters falling into a deep gutter, and it is chiefly on that account I have suggested that the route south of Timor should be adopted.

110. *By the Chairman:* Supposing a line were taken from Port Darwin, it might go south of Timor? Yes.

111. Therefore the same line might be taken from Port Darwin that you would take from Normanton? Just the same.

112. And what difference would there be in the length and value of the cable? About 700 miles. A line starting from Cape York would be about 550 miles longer than from Port Darwin.

113. But what I want to find out is whether, for the purpose of laying down a line, there is anything in favor of Normanton, in Queensland, as against Port Darwin? Yes, there would be this advantage: we should keep away from a well-known coral bank, and a well-known current, both of which would be injurious to the cable, and great care would have to be taken to keep to the north of that current in touching at Timor.

114. *By Mr. Meiss:* That current is likely to act injuriously to the cable? Yes.

115. *By Mr. Griffith:* And you get a better route by Banjoewangie or Sourabaya, south of Timor? Yes, we keep clear of the well-known coral bank and two well-known currents.

116. *By Mr. Meiss:* Would the northern routes be quite out of those currents? Yes.

117. What authority have you from your Company—have you authority to enter into new contracts? Yes.

118. Subject to their approval? I have authority to make a binding contract.

119. *By Mr. Griffith:* Was that letter to Mr. Robertson written in accordance with the instructions of your Company? Yes.

120. And the terms therein specified are the terms for which they are willing to do the work indicated in it? Yes.

121. Would it make any difference whether the cable touched at Banjoewangie or Sourabaya? None.

122. Do you know anything of the seas along that route? We know that starting from the North-west Cape we get into deep water, away from the warm waters in the northern seas, and away from some of the currents; and, although it does not appear on this chart, the route we propose would go from the North-west Cape through Lombok Strait and on to Singapore, and not from Batavia to Singapore. The authorities in England would prefer to go this way.

123. Will you point out where this current is? There are two currents (*indicating positions on map*).

124. Your Companies have no cables in the Eastern seas at present, have they? Only in the Persian Gulf.

125. How far does your communication extend from Singapore? It extends to Rangoon, in connection with the Government of India lines.

126. Have you taken any steps to extend that communication? Yes, I hold a contract to construct a double-wired line from Tewoi to Singapore.

127. Is that line in course of construction? The surveys are now being made.

128. Under whose control will it be? Messrs. Siemens Brothers.

129. Then you have no repairing ships in those seas at present? We have not; our repairing ship, the "Faraday," is in the Atlantic.

130. In the event of a contract being taken for the line you now propose, would you make it a part of the contract that a repairing ship should be kept in this sea? Yes.

131. For the terms specified? Yes.

132. *By Mr. Fraser:* In your fourth proposition you say, "By cable to be supplied, &c." I assume that that means a complete cable entirely separate from the existing communication between Singapore and Batavia? Yes.

133. And you would go from the North-west Cape either through Lombok Strait to Singapore? We have considered that to be the best route; but we should have no objection to go to the right of this line and touch at Batavia.

134. That would be the most direct route? Yes.

135. Would there be any difference in the cost between the line through Lombok Strait and the other line, or would you require an equal subsidy in each case? An equal subsidy.

136. But I understand you to say that the route through Lombok Strait, touching at Sourabaya, was the best? That is the opinion held by the authorities in London.

137. What is the line from Western Australia *via* Ceylon? It was suggested that the line should go from the North-west Cape to Ceylon, *via* Anjer. There might be some danger to the cable at the Cocos Islands. I have been informed that you can look down from some shelving rocks into an unfathomable ocean. These rocks are not more than 300 yards from the coconut trees. It was proposed that the line should go from the North-west Cape to Anjer or Batavia, or thence to Ceylon.

Captain A. Coote.

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138. *By Mr. Frazer:* False Point, in India, was another alternative line that would touch at Singapore? Yes.

139. That would complete a continuous cable from Australia to India? Yes.

140. That is to say, Australia would have a continuous and independent communication with India, which could not be interfered with by any other country? Yes, we could make 1,000-mile connections, all the way from Australia.

141. *By Mr. Griffith:* What is the distance from Copang to Cape York? About 1,000 miles. In each of those places there is a complete duplicate system from the time a message is received at any office in Australia until it is received in England.

142. Have you English operators in each country? Yes, right through.

143. Will you state shortly your route, starting from Rangoon? From Rangoon to Calcutta, then to Kurrachee, thence to Teheran to Tiflis; but between Kurrachee and Bushire there is a cable laid down to duplicate the land line of the Indo-European Company. From Tiflis by the frontiers of Germany to Berlin, and thence to London.

144. Are your principals, the Indo-Australian Telegraph Company, represented there? Yes, we have entered into an agreement with the Indo-European Company to allow us a rebate of 40 per cent. upon all messages from Australia.

145. That is a permanent working arrangement? Yes.

146. *By Mr. Meiss:* Are these several proposals which you make in connection with the subsidy dependent upon the present rate of charges, or are you prepared to allow the Colonies to fix their own rate of charges? We would allow the Colonies to fix their own rate of charges.

147. You would prefer to leave the rate of charges to competition between the different Colonies? I would.

148. Fixing a maximum charge, I suppose? Yes, we should be obliged to do that.

149. What maximum charge would you be prepared to fix? 6s. a word for ten words, including address, which is the present rate.

150. On the terms you offer? On the terms we offer.

151. *By the President:* Your Company has stated what they will lay down a line for from Normanton to Singapore. What will they do it for from Port Darwin—would it be more or less? Less.

152. How much less? We should require a subsidy of £45,000 for a cable from Port Darwin to Singapore.

153. And how much from Normanton or Cape York? £50,000.

154. That would make a difference of £5,000? Yes.

155. *By Mr. Meiss:* The line from Cape York would be shorter, would not that make a difference? There would be the difference in the cost of the cable; we should be prepared to allow that in the subsidy.

156. Then I understand you that the line from Cape York would be £48,500? No, £49,000. Of course, the subsidies have not been calculated on the cost of that cable.

157. *By Sir H. Ayers:* Are you a professional electrician? I am not.

158. How have you obtained your knowledge of the bottom of the seas you have been describing? I have travelled over a great part of them, and I have obtained the latest information respecting them from Captain Nares, of H.M.S. "Challenger," who took lately the only soundings ever taken in those seas, showing the depth along this dotted line [indicating line on map]. We know almost as much of the soundings round and south of Timor as we do of the soundings fifty miles from the Australian coast.

159. Will you state whether this information has been obtained by you, or is derived from your own knowledge? It is not only derived from my own knowledge, but has been collected by me from Captain Nares, the best authority I could obtain from the Admiralty in England, from the latest data, and from the charts giving the actual soundings.

160. But you have not taken soundings on board cable ships yourself? No, I have not actually taken soundings.

161. But you say you know the coral reef along this line? Yes.

162. And you state that there are no coral reefs about Timor? Yes, I know it from the charts made by the Admiralty officer sent down purposely to survey this very spot; from the information that gentleman has given me, and from the soundings actually taken and placed on the charts—

163. You are getting away from my question. You seemed to think there was a coral reef here [indicating locality on map], on this line from Port Darwin to Banjoewangi; was that from your own knowledge of the bottom? The soundings are given on the chart, and show the nature of the bottom. The present cable has been removed from that very coral bank to the sea, which I have told you is now clear of coral reefs.

164. *By Mr. Anderson:* The present cable is clear of the coral bank? Yes, I am given to understand that it was on the edge of the coral bank that it was broken, and that it is now quite clear of it.

165. *By Mr. McLean:* Your principals are connected with the cable across the Atlantic from Australia to America? Yes, by the direct United States cable and through America by the Western Union Telegraph system.

166. Have they received any instructions to negotiate for a line by Honolulu? Yes.

167. What is your opinion of it? There is nothing against it except the expense.

168. But supposing all those islands should agree to a subsidy, there would be no objection on the score of expense? None whatever, only the line is considerably longer than many persons in Australia think it is. The actual distance is somewhere about 7,500 miles, and that would require a length of cable over 8,000 miles: the sections would be cut in lengths of 1,000 miles between San Francisco, and Honolulu, and Fiji.

169. They

Captain A.
Coste.

169. They would not be longer than other existing lines? No, there is nothing against it except commercially; we should get nothing from Honolulu or Fiji.

170. Have these questions been discussed by your Company? Yes. I have, at the present moment the particulars of a subsidy for laying down that cable.

171. *By Mr. Griffith*: And what subsidy do you think would be necessary to open that route? Well, it would be at least double the present subsidy.

172. *By Mr. Stuart*: Are you thinking of starting from Australia? Yes.

173. Why should you start from Australia? Well, the French Government have £8,000 ready as a subsidy for a line from Australia to New Caledonia; and although the outlay would not be very great, we should require a subsidy of £25,000 for that cable alone.

174. *By Mr. McLean*: Well, you should get a subsidy from Honolulu and the other islands, and I do not see why they should not give it for this line? The Government of Honolulu told me that they would give no subsidy, and the Postmaster-General told me the same.

175. But Sir Julius Vogel, who has obtained further information, states that they are very likely to give it? Then there would be no difficulty in constructing the line; you see we should only have to look for through messages from America.

176. It would be to the advantage of your Company, because it would bring a great deal of traffic from New Zealand, as well as the islands? Yes; that is why we are endeavoring to make arrangements with the Honolulu Government to land the first section on that island.

177. *By Mr. Griffith*: What would be the longest section along that route? From Fiji to Honolulu; we have tried all we could to make these cables in 1,000-mile sections, because the cost of laying a cable over 1,000 miles is considerably more than for 1,000 miles, and the cable is more expensive.

178. Have you any knowledge of the sea through which the cable would pass along that route? No; the Secretary to the Postal authorities has promised to send me the information. From what we know of it, it is an exceedingly deep sea, and, as far as we could learn from the "Tusenors," it is a good bottom, and when they got within about thirty miles of the shores of Queensland they reported that their leads dropped into a hole from 3,000 to 4,000 fathoms deep.

179. And so far as you have ascertained, there is quite as good a bottom there as along the route by Java? Yes, as far as we have had experience of the deep sea, we have generally found a soft bottom.

180. *By Mr. McLean*: Have you any authority to lay a cable along that route? Oh, yes; my authority is to obtain the best concessions I can, and to make a route between here and London whichever way you wish it to go.

181. When you were in treaty to make the line from the colonies to England in 1875, had you proper authority to carry out the agreement? Yes.

182. Because I see there is a letter from Sir Julius Vogel, stating that the arrangement fell through because you were unable to carry out your agreement? That letter never reached us, and there was another letter which was handed over by special messengers to Sir Julius Vogel, which has not appeared in the correspondence.

183. Have you that letter? I have. [Witness handed in a letter. *Vide Appendix A.*]

184. And you have looked over this printed correspondence, and see no trace of these letters? No trace whatever.

185. Do you hold full powers of attorney from your principals? Yes, and I have always done so.

186. *By Mr. Stuart*: I should like to know why that contract was not carried out? It was understood that the cable should be put down in a reasonable time—in three months—and it was nearly eighteen months before the three Governments agreed to do it. The instructions were so stringent that not a single concession could be granted, and one afternoon the conditions fell through, for the moment only. In the New Zealand Act, ratifying the agreement, Sir James Vogel inserted a clause authorising the Government of that colony to consent to a cable direct from New Zealand, and on the following morning we saw for the first time in the newspaper that a contract had been signed for a separate cable to Australia from New Zealand with a different company. We were surprised to see this in the morning's newspaper, having left Sir Julius Vogel overnight without receiving any intimation of it, and having been prepared to lay down the New Zealand cable separately ourselves.

187. But, as I understand it, you entered into a memorandum of agreement to construct a certain line, subject to ratification by the Parliaments of the various colonies. That ratification was given, and yet the contract with the Company which you represented fell through? Yes.

188. Well, I want to know why it fell through? For this reason, that at the moment the whole of the money was provided for by a large combination of capitalists; but eighteen months afterwards, owing to complications in the money market in England, that money could not be supplied without certain concessions asked for from the representatives of the different Governments, that certain things were to be granted. Their instructions were not to grant them, and the agreement fell through.

189. Then do I understand that the contract which you made on behalf of your principals was what may be called a sort of sporting offer—that is to say, an offer to make a line, provided all things remained the same with regard to the money market? No; the money was provided for.

190. But there was nothing in your memorandum of agreement to limit the time to three months? It was understood that the whole thing would be ratified in three months, and that I should have to go to England by the next mail.

191. But where several Governments had to be consulted in respect to the construction of a new line of telegraph, it does not appear, to me, at all events, reasonable to expect that everything could be settled within three months? Yes; this Parliament was in session, and it was expected to be done immediately; the Queensland Parliament was in session also, and Sir Julius Vogel left here with the understanding that it should be done at once.

192. Now I come to the object I have endeavored to arrive at by these preliminary questions. You now offer to put down a certain cable for an annual subsidy of £50,000, with a limitation of 6s. a word for the tariff of messages. Is that an offer which would be subject to the approval of the various colonial Parliaments, or is it an offer made in the same way as the last—an offer made with reference to the present cheap rate of money in England, which you might find it impossibly to carry out if money became dearer? No, it is not.

Captain A. Coote.

193. You see on the last occasion you stated that you had full power to bind your principals, and yet when the different Parliaments had ratified the contract it fell through because the gentlemen who were parties to the agreement were no longer in a position to do what they had offered to do. I wish therefore to know whether this offer is subject to the same contingency, or whether it will stand any reverse in the money market? Yes; I am prepared to sign a binding contract.

194. Was not that the case on the last occasion? It was, but the contract was never signed.

195. Was not the agreement as binding upon you as the contract? Yes, but the agreement was that it should be carried out quickly.

196. Well, I want to know whether this offer is made to be carried out quickly? Yes.

197. What is to be the limit of that quickness? Within twelve months.

198. *By Mr. McLean:* Then you considered that the non-fulfilment of an agreement by the different Governments within eighteen months was unreasonable? Yes.

199. *By Mr. Stuart:* We are to understand, then, that on the first occasion you considered three months a reasonable time, and that now you think twelve months reasonable? Yes.

200. You ask a subsidy of £50,000 for this cable? Yes.

201. Has it occurred to you that if the combined Governments paid you this subsidy, they would virtually suppress the other Company? They would get their share.

202. But they would have to work against £50,000? Yes.

203. *By the President:* You said the Governments refused you a slight concession on the last contract, but you did not say what that concession was? I am not quite sure of the exact concession asked for; it was merely alteration of some of the terms of the agreement which was entered into.

204. Then you do not know whether it was a slight one or not? I have always been given to understand that it was a very reasonable request; it was not a question of money at all; it was merely a question of landing cables.

Notes (as revised):—In answering to the many questions put to me, I omitted to state that the Messrs. Siemens wished to be allowed to land the cable at Sorensbaya, in Java, instead of Cebu, because no business was to be expected from the latter place, and asked the representatives to wait for a few days to allow of a telegram being sent to the Governments interested to allow this slight alteration. This, it was stated, was useless, as their instructions were to keep them to the exact agreement; consequently for the moment negotiations stopped, but when leaving the representatives on that afternoon, the Messrs. Siemens told the representatives they were prepared to go on with the New Zealand cable, and so allow time to telegraph on.

I arrived in London twelve hours afterwards, when the Messrs. Siemens at once informed me that it was no fault of theirs; that it appeared to them that they had been made a sort of "buffer" between the Eastern Extension Company and the New Zealand representative. And Sir Daniel Cooper also told me he prevented the competing company from seeing Sir Julius Vogel for a whole day at his private residence. However, it could not be prevented. The Messrs. Siemens knew nothing of this until the announcement was made in the morning papers, as the letters referred to yesterday had in some extraordinary way miscarried.—*ATTWELL COOTE.*

P.S.—Some copies of the old papers I then held are still in the possession of Mr. Jno. Robertson.—A. C.

APPENDIX A.

MESSES. SIEMENS BROTHERS to THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, QUEENSLAND.

12, Queen Anne's Gate,
London S.W., 24th August, 1876.

Sir,

In the printed papers relating to Telegraph Cable negotiations headed "1876, New Zealand," which have been forwarded by the Government of New Zealand to the Governments of each of the Australian Colonies, we find under No. 13 the copy of a letter purporting to be addressed to us by the Honorable J. Vogel and Sir D. Cooper, under date of 21st May, 1875, which letter has never reached our hands.

It is obvious from the tone and contents of that communication that we could not have allowed the same to have passed without our protest, had it ever reached us.

On the other hand, we find that an important letter addressed by us to the Commissioners, and handed by special messenger to each of them, has been omitted from the correspondence.

The following is a copy of the same:—

"Queen Anne's Gate,
London S.W., 7th May, 1875.

"Sir,

"We have the honor to hand you herewith printed copy of the memorandum Articles of Association of the Indo-Australasian Telegraph Company Limited, which has been formed by the several gentlemen who have hitherto acted in concert with us, with the view of establishing a second and independent telegraphic communication between India and Australasia.

"We are authorised to say that the promoters of the above company, whose names are affixed to the memorandum Articles of Association (as per enclosed copy) are prepared to enter into negotiations with you and the representatives of New South Wales and Queensland, on the subject of the assistance intended to be granted by the Colonial Governments interested in the furtherance of the undertaking.

"We shall be glad to hear that you are willing to negotiate with the company on the subject, and any communication you will honor us with we shall have great pleasure in submitting to them.

"We are, &c.,

The Premier of New Zealand.

We consider it a duty to ourselves to call your attention to the above.

And have, &c.,

"SIEMENS BROTHERS."

SIEMENS BROTHERS.