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From the West India Committee Circular.
THAT CABLE SERVICE!

The West Indian cable system—with the notable exception of that part of it connecting Jamaica with Bermuda, regarding which we hear nothing but praise—is really past praying for. At the time of writing it is in a state of complete chaos. The Jamaica Porto Rico cables, which were interrupted in July and August last, again broke down on September 30th, cutting off the whole of the West Indies east of Jamaica from cable communication. From that date until January 5th, when communication with Barbados via Porto Rico was restored, it was possible to telegraph between the West Indies and the Mother Country only by means of the local Government wireless when in action, or via Santiago and the French cables connecting Cuba, and Haiti and Porto Rico, and that at a cost of 3s. 10d. per word as against the normal rate of 2s. 6d. provided for in the agreement of August 19th, 1914 with the West Indies and Panama Telegraph Company. Since then the French lines referred to have broken down, and messages can only be sent via New York and Haiti. But this is not all, the cable between British Guiana and Trinidad has been out of action since December, and since November 7th Barbados has been unable to get into touch by cable with either Trinidad or Demerara. As a result "telegraphic" communication between those parts of the West Indies can only be effected when the Government wireless stations are working. For the rest telegrams are being

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sent on from Barbados by steamer and schooner—a preposterous state of affairs in this enlightened Twentieth Century. Can it be wondered at that the West India Committee is being bombarded with protests and complaints? Naturally, these constant breakdowns and the mutilation of messages involve loss and inconvenience; but the grave disadvantages of that lack of cable communication does not end there, and we need only recall the fantastic rumours which were circulated in this country on the occasion of the recent strike disturbances in Trinidad to emphasise the anxiety which the absence of effective means of communication must cause to all interested in the West Indies. Sir Edward Davson, in his recent address before the Royal Society of Arts, put the matter in a nutshell when he said that, granted that the cable was to the business firm what the voice was to the individual, the West Indian firms recently had been almost inarticulate. Frequently broken cables, alleviated sometimes by spasmodic efforts of the wireless communication, and more frequently only by the resort to such archaic methods as sending messages by ships, have resulted in incredible delays, and sometimes even in the total disappearance of messages en route, and almost invariably in their mutilation. While such a state of affairs continues to exist, it is not surprising that the decision of the Colo-

onial Office not to undertake the expense of laying fresh cables has caused profound disappointment. We have never wavered in our opinion that the only way to remedy these disquieting conditions is for the Government to provide an all-red cable service via Bermuda or St. Lucia, and linking up the other West Indian colonies by efficient cables or wireles. We are assured that the existing subsidies already being paid by Canada and the West Indies would go far towards meeting the necessary capital outlay, and we trust that this view will be endorsed by the Associated Chamber of Commerce at its forthcoming meeting in Barbados. The present cable contract has still four years to run, and it seems to us incredible that the West Indies will tolerate the continuance of the present state of chaos until its expiration in 1924. We are satisfied that no other country would do so, and venture to throw out the hope that the Colonial Office may possibly see its way to appoint a committee of those prominently interested to consider and report upon the best means of securing some amelioration of the present state of affairs—*Barbados Globe*.

Richard Zakers

is asked to call at the Post Office, Christiansted.