

The Hon. J. KIDD (N.S.W.) : I should like to have the word "butter" inserted after "meat." I know that the phrase "and other products" includes "butter," but it is likely to become such an important article of export that I think it should be specially mentioned in this paragraph. At the present time, owing to the want of space on the steamers, we are not able to export all our surplus butter.

The Hon. J. G. WARD (N.Z.) : I quite agree that the proposed stipulation is a very important one. With regard to butter, I may say that our experience in New Zealand has been that the right way to deal with butter exported to the old country is to freeze it ashore first and then put it into the steamer's freezing chamber, so that if sufficient space is provided for frozen meat, the requirements with regard to frozen butter could be met in the ordinary freezing rooms of the mail steamers.

The PRESIDENT : I look upon the insertion of this provision in the future contract as a matter of great importance to the interests of Australia. Every colony is now striving to increase the number of its products by the export of articles which it is best fitted to produce. Tasmania has its fruit industry ; Victoria its butter industry ; New South Wales its various industries ; and last, but not least, Queensland has its meat industry, which will yet assume proportions that will astonish the old country, and possibly ourselves as well. I must express my pleasure at the really practical nature of the suggestions made by the permanent heads of departments for insertion in the contract. They show that those gentlemen have watched the various interests of the colonies outside their own departments, and kept up with the march of progress.

Amendment—To insert "butter"—agreed to.

The Hon. A. WYNNE (V.) : I agree that this is a very important addition to the contract. I would further suggest that in making provision for carrying frozen meat there should be a certain reservation of space for each port. At the present time the mail steamers fill up as they choose, and recently 800 tons of butter were kept back in Victoria for five or six weeks because there was no space available. New South Wales was then thrown over, and one steamer was kept to take away Victorian butter, which was as unfair to New South Wales as the preceding delay was to Victoria. If a reservation was made of a certain amount of space for each port, all parties would know how to prepare their produce for exportation, and no such delays would occur. I move, therefore, the insertion of the words, "That arrangements be made for a certain proportion of space to be reserved for each port of call."

Mr. C. TODD (S.A.) : South Australia will suffer in an intensified degree the inconvenience mentioned by the hon. gentleman, and I shall therefore support the amendment.

The PRESIDENT : I am afraid that by inserting all these conditions we shall be hampering the action of tenderers, and adding very considerably to the amount of subsidy which will be required. One colony will require a much larger space at one season of the year than another. Victoria may ship butter all the year round, but Tasmania cannot ship fruits at all seasons of the year, and will require a great deal more space when fruit is in season than at other times. I think, therefore, that it would be well to withdraw the amendment, and leave this matter to be arranged according to the exigencies and requirements of each port.

The Hon. J. KIDD : There is a great deal in what the Hon. Mr. Wynne has said. I can see that we may get into a difficulty if we try to find a fair proportion. That would probably be fixed on the basis of our respective contributions to the subsidy, and in that case Tasmania would be left rather out in the cold. We might, however, insert a proviso that in the new tenders the companies should state what space would be available for butter, meat, and fruit. The Hon. Mr. Ward has pointed out that, if butter is in a frozen condition, it does not matter whether it is put with the meat or not. We are very much hampered through the steamers having only about one-half the accommodation they would have to provide if they were building their steamers now. It is of great importance to the colonies that provision should be made for the carriage by the mail steamers of our frozen meat, butter, and fruit. That is quite as important as anything we are now discussing, and, as was said by the President, it is an evidence that the heads of the departments can go a little outside the range of their departments and recognise what is to the interests of the colonies. I hope the Conference will agree to this, perhaps, in a modified form. The provision that tenderers are prepared to make would influence me in deciding between them quite as much as the amount of subsidy for the carriage of the mails. The question as to how we are to get rid of our surplus produce in the most expeditious way is most important.

The Hon. J. G. WARD (N.Z.) moved the omission of the word "all" before "conveniences," and the addition of the following words at the end of the paragraph :—"That tenderers shall state what cold storage space they will be prepared to supply, having due regard to the requirements of each colony."

Amendment agreed to ; and question, as amended, put and passed.

Conditions of Present Contracts.

Recommendation—

"That the other general conditions of the present contracts be agreed to"—

Put and passed.

Abolition of Accelerated Train through France and Italy.

Recommendation—

"In view of the fact that whilst the mails from Australasia are carried by the accelerated train through Italy and France those by Orient steamers are carried by ordinary mail train, the time occupied being about the same in each case, we recommend that the accelerated train service be abolished as decided at the Adelaide Conference of 1890, especially as out of the postage of 2½d. per ½oz. letter $\frac{1}{8}$ of 1d. has to be paid for the Continental transit by such trains against $\frac{3}{8}$ of 1d. by ordinary trains"—

Put and passed.

Apportionment