

for the Imperial Government we have to distribute over 500 tons in one year. The proportion of work done by these Colonies for the Mother Country—she receiving the whole of the revenues from postal matter delivered here—the amount of work done here is far in excess of the work done for us. Therefore on some future occasion it will be desirable to consider, if the subsidies are to continue, to give a more equitable distribution of that charge. There is only one other point to which I will refer. Some of the concessions asked for have been granted by the Committee of the Post Office in London; others will be referred to by subsequent letter. In some minor points we have found ourselves running upon parallel lines with them, and it is well that we have no reserved opinions which we do not express with regard to these matters. With reference to the question of coloured labour, I fully sympathise with the views expressed in letters and correspondence, and in the words uttered by the representatives of these Colonies. I would like to point out there is another side to this very important question. Upon a late occasion, when it was discussed I gave my voice with the majority, because I am satisfied if the Orient Steam Company's service can be conducted with English labour, the P & O. service should be also conducted; and we are not handicapping the P & O. Company in their competition with the Orient Line by demanding that they shall employ white labour as the Orient Company do. It is apparent that if one Company can do it, as they are doing it, without incurring extra cost, the other Company can also do it. There is one point we should bear in mind when we are meeting our confreres in connection with the Imperial service—I use the term Imperial as embracing Australia, for we are an integral part of the Empire—we must not forget the Empire embraces 250 millions of our fellow subjects in India. It appears to me to be a very strange thing that we should be forgetful, or, if we are not forgetful, that those who are seeking to monopolise the labour of Australia should be altogether forgetful, of these fellow subjects and their interests. We should not, Sir, be forgetful of the position we occupy as inheriting what our forefathers did only 150 years ago, when it gave the East India Company a charter to take possession of and build up a commercial Company. English treasure and English blood were spilt, and ultimately that vast Indian Empire was taken over as part and parcel of the British Empire. Irrespective of other incongruities, when I see two representatives of Colonies before me which have developed their resources largely by the employment of coloured labour,—when I remember that Queensland has had to retrace her steps with reference to this matter, and that Western Australia will most probably have to be developed with the aid of coloured labour,—it does seem incongruous with these facts before us, if they be facts, that we should be so deliberately setting our faces against the employment of a few hundred Lascars. I make a point of these things in order that our people may be reminded that we cannot always devote ourselves solely to the advancement of what seems to be our personal interests at the moment. Our personal interests are associated with the development of the whole of Australia. Although I belong to Tasmania, I have interests in Queensland and other Colonies,—that interest which you all have,—an interest which will be very much greater in the great future Commonwealth which will be developed. Under this great Commonwealth we must not forget these things: those for whom we work must not forget these facts. In attempting to secure for the people the benefits they desire, we must forget our insularity and those things which are purely selfish, and remember that we are parts of a great Empire. We must look abroad and remember we are not Australian people only, but that we are part of the British Empire, with 300 millions of our fellow subjects living in India.

Sir JOHN FORREST Mr President:—I do not feel able, with the information I have before me, to subscribe to the motion of the Hon. Mr Cook. It seems to me altogether unnecessary at the present time. The telegram which has been read to us, I take it, merely refers to the present extension of the contract, namely, to the 31st of January, 1898, and not to the new contract, which was adumbrated by the Conference at Wellington. I think it must be obvious to all of us that it would not be very easy or convenient for these companies to alter their arrangements. The telegram sent us in no way conveys the intimation that, under the new contract which will be called for two years hence, a great many, if not all, of the conditions asked for at the Wellington Conference may not be complied with. I cannot, therefore, see any reason for taking up the position that Mr Cook proposes to take; and, with regard to the question of coloured labour, I notice it is practically the same recommendation.

Hon. P O FYSH We understand it applies to future contracts, and not to this.

Sir JOHN FORREST This should apply to the next two years?

Hon. P O FYSH No.

Sir JOHN FORREST Does the telegram we have received a reply to refer to future contracts or to the next two years? I read it as referring to the next two years upon two of the points, and as regards the other concessions asked for they will write us. That does not imply that when a new contract is desired they will not be able to comply with the conditions set forth in the Conference at Wellington.

Mr. COOK The conditions of the Wellington Conference were intended to apply to the next two years.

Sir JOHN FORREST From what we have done here we have practically agreed with these conditions, at any rate that we are prepared to accept the contract without the conditions of the Conference at Wellington being granted, and therefore it seems to me that as the companies