

are prepared to comply with some of the recommendations it cannot be considered as other than satisfactory. I notice that letter J, Class 2, says that "tenders shall not state what class of labour is to be employed," and recommends to the Imperial authorities that mail steamers be manned by white crews, that is practically the same as the motion passed by this Conference. I did not know it went so far as to absolutely state we would not have anything to do with any contract in which coloured crews formed part of the manning of the steamers. I take it, therefore, Sir, that the recommendations of letter J just about equal the resolution passed by us the other day. I must say I quite agree with the remarks of Mr Fysh in regard to this matter. It seems to me we must not get too narrow and selfish in our views on this question of coloured labour. I cannot think that the fact that a few hundred Lascars, subjects of the same Sovereign, being employed upon the mail steamers should be a matter that the Australian people should take so strongly to heart as to say "we will not even allow them to be employed." It seems to me we are getting into a position of great insulation, and also in a position in which we may be charged with very great selfishness. I do not know what the people of Australia think in regard to the question of immigration from the mother country,—I believe the consensus of opinion is even opposed to that on any large scale, I have no sympathy with that feeling either.

Hon. P O FYSH They are opposed to assisted immigration.

Sir JOHN FORREST They are opposed to immigration in large numbers of any people because it will interfere probably with the price of labour. This is not immigration, but merely the question of a few hundred sailors, natives of India, a country I think which we are proud to have dominion over, subjects of the same Sovereign, having a right to be employed upon the mail steamers coming into our ports. Considering this is not a bargain we are making altogether on our own account—if that were so we would be perfectly right in insisting upon any conditions we might think fit—but is a bargain we are entering into jointly with the mother country (hear, hear,) how can we expect the British Government to do anything which would encourage the idea in India that the natives were to be excluded from becoming sailors upon British vessels? It seems to me such a thing might have a very damaging effect upon the Empire at large. Whilst I am as strong as any one in this room in the desire to exclude from this Continent of Australia the coloured races, and do not desire to build up the country with coloured races—I wish it in every way to be a British country and community to the utmost extent—still I must say we are placing ourselves in a very selfish position by advocating that even the steamers that come across the ocean to us, and in which we are interested and have to pay a subsidy to, should not employ coloured labour. While we have to pay that subsidy even I do not know whether we should say we will not allow the mail steamers to be manned by coloured races, especially those races being our own fellow subjects. I must say I see no reason whatever for this resolution, especially when we have already expressed the same opinion in the Conference at Wellington it seems to me like overdoing it. I hope, therefore, that the members of this Conference will not support the motion which has been made.

Hon. A. J. THYNNE :—Mr President : It seems to me the resolution proposed by Mr. Cook goes further than is needed. The discussion has turned a good deal upon the question of the employment of coloured labour. Upon that subject I sympathise with Mr Cook to this extent, that the Governments of these Colonies should not give facilities for the employment of coloured labour in positions which can be filled with equal economy or satisfaction by our own race; that, I presume, no one will for a moment question to be a wise policy. The Queensland Government, in their contracts with British-Indian steamers, made it a condition that the ships should be manned by purely white crews. I believe that Government would, if entering into any separate contracts, make the same stipulations. I hope I speak upon this question in agreement with the views of the Colony of Queensland. I believe all the Colonies would join in that view with regard to this question. (Hear, hear.) There is, however, a very considerable difference in the relation of Australian Governments to their constituents. It is not diplomatic, and it is not wise, to express now too strong an opinion, too strong a resolution, which we might be forced by circumstances or prevented from adhering to upon future occasions. I have no reason for not giving my support to the resolution. The Hon. Mr Cook will see, as regards the question of coloured labour, there is practically very little difference between us. There are some other questions, for instance, the question of supplying cold storage and refrigerating space. With regard to these I have to inform hon. Members of this Conference Queensland is negotiating a separate service with the old country. It will be for her to consider these questions when these new contracts are verified, or when fresh tenders are called for the conveyance of mails. It will be for her to make representation, perhaps, to some future Conference that her position in relation to the different Colonies and their contracts is slightly altered. For that reason I am not able, having in view the special interests of Queensland, to commit myself to anything. So far as the extension of these contracts is concerned, when the proposal to extend it was submitted to the various Australasian Colonies, it was my duty to take it into consideration, and with very little hesitation I came to the conclusion that the wisest course was to assent to the increase proposed by the Imperial Post Office, with the modifications which have been suggested, and which I am very pleased to see have been conceded, that is, to include the parcels post. Queensland having obtained concessions which I suggested could be made, has obtained all that she has asked for; I therefore do not feel myself at liberty to go further. I regret that I am unable to vote with my hon. friend Mr. Cook upon this motion.