

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

FIRST DAY.

Tuesday, 26th March, 1907.

The Conference met at the Foreign Office. There were present :—

The Right Hon. DAVID LLOYD GEORGE, M.P. (President of the Board of Trade), *in the Chair.*

United Kingdom Delegates.

Mr. H. LLEWELLYN SMITH, C.B.,	} Of the Board of Trade.	Mr. K. ANDERSON,	} Shipowners.
Mr. WALTER J. HOWELL, C.B.,		Mr. H. F. FERNIE,	
Mr. R. ELLIS CUNLIFFE,		Mr. NORMAN HILL,	
Captain A. J. G. CHALMERS,	} Of the Colonial Office.	Mr. J. HAVELOCK WILSON, M.P.,	} Representing Seamen.
Mr. H. BERTRAM COX, C.B.,		Mr. D. J. KENNY,	
Mr. A. B. KEITH,			

Australian Delegates.

Hon. Sir W. J. LYNE, K.C.M.G.	Hon. DUGALD THOMSON.
Hon. W. M. HUGHES.	

Dr. H. N. WOLLASTON, LL.D., I.S.O., of the Australian Commonwealth Department of Trade and Customs, was also in attendance.

New Zealand Delegates.

Hon. Sir JOSEPH WARD, K.C.M.G.	Mr. WILLIAM BELCHER.
Mr. JAMES MILLS.	Mr. A. E. HISLOP.

Dr. FITCHETT, Solicitor-General of New Zealand, was also in attendance.

Secretaries.

Mr. JAMES A. WEBSTER,	} Of the Board of Trade.	Mr. J. HISLOP, Private Secretary to Sir J. Ward.
Mr. G. E. BAKER,		Mr. D. J. QUINN, Private Secretary to Sir W. Lyne.

AGENDA.

1. Address by the Chairman.
2. Selection of Secretaries.
3. Consideration of future procedure.
4. Consideration of questions arising out of the Australian Navigation Bill and the report of the Royal Commission thereupon—
 - (a) with reference to the Coasting trade;
 - (b) with reference to vessels trading overseas.
5. Other business.

The Rt. Hon. DAVID LLOYD GEORGE (President of the Board of Trade): Gentlemen, I think we had better commence the business of the Conference. Perhaps you will permit me at the outset, on behalf of the Imperial Government and on the part of the British delegates, to welcome the representatives of the Colonies here. It is a great delight for us to meet them at this the first of the series of conferences to be held between Great Britain and her Colonies. Although there are questions of moment—far-reaching in their character—to be discussed at the great Conference in front of us, I am sure there will be none of greater practical importance than those which are to be submitted to this Conference in the course of the next few days, and certainly none of greater urgency owing to the immensity of the interests involved. The British Empire owns half the merchant fleet of the world, and the Mother Country carries about half the international trade of the world, and in spite of her years she is carrying it with increasing rapidity and readiness. A good many questions have arisen in the working of the New Zealand Shipping and Seamen's Act, 1904, and there are a good many questions for adjustment which have arisen under the Australian Navigation and Shipping Bill. I understand that the New Zealand Shipping Act received the Royal Assent on the understanding that it should be considered at this Conference. The provision of these Acts of Parliament and the suggestions contained in the report to the Royal Commission on the Australian Navigation and Shipping Bill have caused some apprehension amongst British

shipowners lest those measures should impose on British ships in Colonial ports restrictions and requirements which might be inconsistent with those which are imposed by Imperial Legislation. These Imperial restrictions are very onerous in their character, and they are increasing in their burden practically from Act of Parliament to Act of Parliament. The burdens imposed upon the shipowners in this country by Imperial Legislation I think I may claim to be the most onerous in the world, and the fact that British shipowners—British shipping—has thriven in spite of them, is beyond all praise. But if these regulations vary from colony to colony, and there is a lack of uniformity, then British shipowners naturally feel that they may become so burdensome as to be almost impossible to bear, and I think the same observation will apply to the Colonial shipping. It is also to their interest that uniformity should be secured. Colonial shipping is in its infancy; I do not see why in the future it should not claim its share of the international shipping of the world, and naturally it is in the interests of Colonial shipping that you should procure now, so far as it is practicable, uniformity in the regulations imposed upon the shipping of the world. Some such success has been achieved in securing international uniformity with regard to two or three matters of very great importance, and I am not sure that we are not on the eve of securing some kind of international uniformity with regard to load-line. The great maritime countries of the world are approximating to the British rule in this respect. I