

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

as to ventilation—sub-section (b) of that section—our report says this:—"The medical witnesses were emphatic in recommending that, in addition to the air-space, provisions should be made for adequate ventilation. Doctors Robertson and Ham—they are the Health Officers, I think, of Brisbane and Melbourne—stated that 3,000 cubic feet of pure air per hour per man was the recognised minimum for the maintenance of health and comfort. It would appear that the section of the Merchant Shipping Act dealing with this most urgent matter has proved ineffective. As a matter of practice, the usual method of ventilation is by means of a shaft, down which, on occasions, a current of air rushes, seriously affecting the comfort, and even the health, of individuals within its immediate radius. On those ships which your Commissioners visited, the ventilators were closed up with rags, and the quarters, in consequence, stuffy and permeated with disagreeable odours. Your Commissioners, therefore, recommend that provision be made for efficiently ventilating the sleeping quarters by such means as will secure a diffusion of fresh air without such draughts as would be likely to prove prejudicial to the health of the seaman or apprentice. Several witnesses stated that this could be accomplished by electric fans and foul-air extractors, that it was certainly no more difficult to ventilate a ship than an ordinary dwelling, and that sanitary experts could easily effect the desired improvements. Your Commissioners, therefore, recommend the adoption of such provisions as will insure this being done." Now, sub-section (c) deals with sanitary and hygienic arrangements, and the report says:—"With regard to sanitary and hygienic arrangements, these, as already pointed out, are in many cases non-existent; in others, inadequate; and in few, what they should be. Your Commissioners recommend that provision be made for the erection of bath-rooms, which in steamships should have an ample supply of hot water for the use of engineers, firemen, and greasers, and others, together with a sufficient number of suitable urinals and privies." With regard to light—sub-section (d)—we say:—"Notwithstanding the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act Regulations that sufficient light should be available to enable ordinary newspaper print to be read by a seaman in his bunk under normal conditions, the generality of forecables are dark, gloomy, and depressing." I do not think, therefore, that, excluding the consideration of the 120 cubic feet which ought to be applied to all ships where it can be made to apply to those ships, although ships ought to be exempted where it would be unreasonable to ask them to apply it—but with respect to sanitary arrangements and ventilation, it should be applied to all ships without exception at all, and no Minister or anybody else should have the right to except them.

MR. BELCHER: Hear, hear.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: If 3,000 cubic feet of pure air hour per man is necessary to keep men in health, I do not think that any Act of Parliament, or any Minister, or any shipowner, should have the right to prevent that being supplied.

THE CHAIRMAN: Possibly discussion might be shortened by the fact that, if Sir Joseph Ward agrees, Mr. Norman Hill would be willing to strike out the words "ventilation and conveniences" from his motion.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: If you put it quite clear that so much cubic feet space is to be allocated to each seaman I shall be quite willing. But let us put exactly what we mean.

MR. NORMAN HILL: Cubic and superficial space.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: That will do.

MR. NORMAN HILL: Devoted to seamen.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Now, will you read that, so that we may be quite sure how far it goes.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I was going to suggest, with reference to the pencilled memorandum, that those words would be better where they were suggested by Sir Joseph Ward than right at the end.

THE CHAIRMAN: That is a suggestion to put the words before "the local authorities" "are in fact insanitary." That does not change the motion, does it?

HON. W. M. HUGHES: In that motion, so far as I am concerned, I shall not give my vote for anything that mentions the word "sanitary" at all. It is to be understood that all the conditions shall apply to all ships, Colonial and other, except as to crew space—that that shall be, except where it is unreasonable, 120 cubic feet, or (where they are British ships) as provided by Imperial legislation.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: It would read this way—"That the Governments of Australia and New Zealand"—and so on—"as regards cubic and superficial space accommodation devoted to seamen" and so on. That meets it.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I do not think so.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: The words "in the opinion of the local authorities" have been suggested.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: They would be better.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Might I say this on a point which has been exercising Mr. Belcher's mind, because I am anxious that we should be unanimous on a matter of this kind? It is not possible for this Conference to pass a resolution for retrospective legislation that is going to be the slightest use, because the Government of New Zealand I believe would not assent to it. All the administration we have there—the improvement of the conditions of the seamen and everything else—is done by the Act as it is, and they are all anxious to improve these conditions, and I know from experience of what took place with the Shipping Bill before the Committee, that retrospective legislation could not be carried through, and if we are going to do that, I for my part should vote against it. It is quite hopeless for us to get it in our country. We cannot get retrospective legislation there, for the Government would not introduce it.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Can you call it retrospective legislation when you apply it to existing things?

SIR JOSEPH WARD: We call it retrospective if it applies to existing things which were authorised according to law, and makes what was lawful unlawful.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Why, one of your chief legislative Acts deals with the existing landowners' land.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Oh, and quite right, too, because we pay the landowner the full value of everything we acquire from him. If you were to put a clause in saying that the Government is to take over these ships by paying for them, and then do what it likes with them, that is another thing. That is as we treat the landowner. We say to a landowner, "We will acquire your land and pay you the full value. If you do not agree to the price then settle it by the Arbitration Court."

HON. W. M. HUGHES: And to your factory owner you say, "You must make your factory"—not your new factory, but your old factory—"to suit us."

SIR JOSEPH WARD: What we do is this. We establish a factory law providing for the conditions of the worker and the duties of the employer. A man need not carry it out unless he likes—he may close the factory. If he does not our inspector will come along and say to the people in charge of the factory, "This condition of affairs cannot continue and this must be done." But you cannot do that with a ship. In New Zealand we have by legislation provided for the most advanced things of any country in the world, but we could not do that.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: Do I understand you to mean this,—that everything you are passing with regard to new ships should apply to old ships?

SIR JOSEPH WARD: No, I do not say that.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: This very resolution that you are passing now is retrospective.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: No, it provides for administration, but does not affect existing rights without reasonable qualification.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: Well, it is retrospective, because you are giving power to ships that exist to be so altered as to come up to sanitary requirements.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Certainly, every ship that was built could not have been built in contemplation of this