

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

prescribed by Colonial laws shall not apply to existing vessels—that is just in accordance with their own proposal—in cases where the Minister is satisfied that the character of the structural alterations necessary in order to comply with the limit would be unreasonable and the existing accommodation is not less than 72 cubic feet and 12 superficial feet? Now, Mr. Hughes is in favour of that.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: 72 cubic feet and 12 what?

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: 12 superficial feet.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: Do you think it is a good thing to put a minimum?

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: It does not matter in this case. I agree with you that if it were a new provision creating a new condition, the naming of a minimum tends to make that minimum almost a maximum, but this is a different case; this is a special provision given for non-alteration, and it is really a limit that that non-alteration shall not be allowed when there is not that much accommodation, but the circumstances have to be such as to make it difficult or impossible to make the alteration—then you say that you may give permission, but not below that limit. That is really the safeguard in such a case.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: They cannot give it below.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: But you could.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: As there appears to be some difficulty—

HON. W. M. HUGHES: One moment. Mr. Thomson put it one way, and I have it the other.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: And I have a third.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I should just like to have it “right: that the limit of cubic feet and superficial space for the accommodation of seamen and apprentices prescribed by Colonial law shall apply to existing vessels, except where the Minister is satisfied that the character of the structural alterations necessary in order to comply with the limit would be unreasonable, in which case such other cubic and superficial space shall be provided as the inspector or other officers shall recommend.”

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I am trying to suggest a middle course which I think would probably commend itself to the shipping trade, and I hope to the representatives from Australia and New Zealand as well. Taking the original motion, I move “that the limit of accommodation prescribed for officers and crew should apply to existing vessels except in cases where the Minister is satisfied that the character of the structural alterations necessary in order to comply with the limit would be unreasonable, in which case he will require only such existing vessels as have accommodation which in his opinion is in fact insanitary to improve the same so as to bring it into a sanitary and healthful condition to his satisfaction.”

HON. W. M. HUGHES: No, I am perfectly fixed in my opinion that as far as sanitary and ventilation and hygienic arrangements generally are concerned, under no circumstances ought the Minister to be permitted—or if he were permitted, ought he for a moment to allow any exemption.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I know you want to meet the shipowners as far as you can, and if you stick out for something they do not agree to, it comes back to this, that this end of the world is different to ours—and are we going to stick out for something that cannot be done, and to refuse something which everybody agrees to do?

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I will put in your motion down “to unreasonable” and leave it to the good sense of all parties to interpret the rest the best way they can. There is one point you made there which I think is very necessary, and that is, the limit of cubic and superficial space for officers, seamen, and apprentices.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: “Officers and crew.”

HON. W. M. HUGHES: “Officers and crew”—that will do. “That the limit of accommodation prescribed for officers and crew should apply to existing vessels except in cases where the Minister is satisfied that the character of the structural alterations necessary in

“order to comply with the limit would be unreasonable”—that is all.

MR. NORMAN HILL: We do attach importance to the form. I believe we are absolutely at one with what Sir Joseph Ward and Sir William Lyne have said about this, but we do not think that it is right that the legislation should be made retrospective.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: If the result of the vote that you ask me to give is to be interpreted that I am against retrospective legislation, I could not vote with you.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: That is not the effect.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: Then Mr. Hill says that in his motion he wants to get clearly an indication that it is not retrospective.

MR. NORMAN HILL: We want you to judge of a ship as to whether it is sanitary or not, and not by any regulation made after the ship was built. Mr. Hughes's resolution leads off with a statement that the new conditions are to apply to the old ships. Now, sir, we do want you to put it the other way—that you will judge of old ships by their merits—are they sanitary or are they not? If they are not sanitary, how can they be made sanitary—not how can they be brought strictly in accordance with your new regulations.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Sanitation has nothing to do with cubic and superficial space. They might be in a place like this room, and yet be woefully insanitary.

MR. MILLS: It is recognised that the Colonies have the right to legislate for the shipping trade in their waters, whether the vessels are locally owned or owned in Great Britain. It therefore becomes a question of compromise, and it is hopeless to expect that all modern ships could comply with these much more extensive requirements. The proposal now is, that all ships already built, where it is not unreasonable to make them comply with modern requirements, should do so, and at a reasonable expenditure.

MR. ANDERSON: What meaning do you attach to “structural alteration”? Structural alteration may be quite practicable, but, commercially speaking, it may be impossible.

MR. MILLS: It is difficult to define.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I do not quite understand.

MR. MILLS: The question of whether alterations are unreasonable must be left very largely to the officers.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: But the Minister should decide. No doubt, any Minister would get the advice of his officers.

MR. MILLS: Certainly.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Do you see any objection to this last suggestion of mine?

MR. NORMAN HILL: It may be only form, but you lead off with a statement that the new regulations apply to old ships.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: It is a question of words, really—it is “shall” or “shall not.” Now, why not omit that first portion altogether? Surely we have got so near that we can arrive at a settlement. Why not omit that first portion and say, as an addendum to the resolution already passed (Resolution 4), something to the effect that has been proposed with regard to the accommodation of the crew, but without using the words “shall” or “shall not.”

THE CHAIRMAN: The difference between the two forms is, that that proposal would impose the new standard upon all vessels, except in a particular case, where an exemption was given. The other form of resolution would not apply, but would give full powers to the local authorities to require improvements where they thought them necessary.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I am quite willing to accept that.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: This is the position. Every Colonial shipowner will be a competitor with every one of these British vessels, because it will only apply to those