

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Certainly it is a step—everything is a step. One bite is a step towards lunch, but not a very satisfactory one. Give every ship an opportunity of coming into compliance with the Act by giving, say, 12 months to do it, and if he cannot do it owing to the structural alterations being unreasonable, then the Minister may exempt him so far as cubic and superficial space are concerned, but he cannot exempt him in reference to sanitary and hygienic arrangements.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: He cannot under this proposal.

THE CHAIRMAN: You have got the ventilation, you have got the conveniences; you have got your way there.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: If we have lunch now, we can see what we can do afterwards.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I think you are safe in doing it.

MR. BELCHER: There is one question I should like to ask Mr. Hill, and it is this: In the event of a vessel having the bare amount of space allowed by your Act, and an expenditure of £10, £15 or £20 would make the conditions of the ship equal to the demands of the Act, would there be any objection to that being done? I gather from what is being said by the shipowners that they object to any alterations being made in any ship at all built prior to the regulations. I gather that from their remarks. It appears to me that they are very insistent on that point—that they do not want to be compelled, under any circumstances to make any alterations whatever. The point we are trying to come to is this, that where it is possible without dispossessing the shipowner or putting him to undue cost—

MR. NORMAN HILL: I am very sorry that anything I have said has conveyed to Mr. Belcher the idea that we would intentionally not introduce an improvement which would involve a trifling expenditure of the sum Mr. Belcher has named. I think our records warrant us in saying that it is hardly a reasonable suggestion to make. We should be only too glad to introduce any improvements we can to make our men more contented.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I think if I understood the question Mr. Belcher put, it was whether, if this resolution was decided on, there would be any hesitation on the part of the shipowners to carry it out.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I have made another amendment to this, and I should like to read it before we go to lunch. "That the provisions relating to the limits of accommodation prescribed by Colonial laws shall not apply to existing vessels for a period of two years from the passing of that Act" (our Act that means) "except in cases where the Minister is satisfied that the structural alterations are necessary in order to comply with the sanitary and hygienic arrangements."

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: Why give them two years, if it ought to be done at once.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Two years for what?

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: Two years to alter their ships.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Certainly, I would give them a chance.

MR. COX: Mr. Hughes has given us a most deplorable condition of things. If I were in Australia, I would not perpetuate that for two years. I would not give them six weeks.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I want to give them an opportunity to bring their ships up to our requirements so far as cubic space is concerned. In other respects, of course, there ought to be no time allowed.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Here is my amendment: "The limit of accommodation prescribed by Colonial laws should apply to existing vessels provided that in cases where the Minister, having regard to such limit, is satisfied that the accommodation actually provided is in fact unsatisfactory and unhealthful, he may require the owner to amend the same so as to bring it into a sanitary and healthful condition to the satisfaction of the Minister."

MR. NORMAN HILL: "Having regard to such limit"—it is not quite clear what that refers to.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: It refers to the limit of accommodation provided by the Colonial laws.

MR. NORMAN HILL: "Having regard to the accommodation" actually provided.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: "Where the Minister is satisfied that the accommodation is actually provided"?

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Yes.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: No. "Where the Minister is satisfied that the accommodation actually provided is in fact unsatisfactory and unhealthful, he may require the owner to amend the same so as to bring it into a sanitary and healthful condition to the satisfaction of the Minister."

MR. NORMAN HILL: It is not what we wanted, but we will support it in order to get unanimity.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I think we ought to have unanimity if possible.

THE CHAIRMAN: Can we get the unanimity of the delegations? You will accept that, Sir Joseph, on behalf of the New Zealand delegation?

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I would accept that because it puts it into the power of the Government to do what these gentlemen wish.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I do not care which one it is. I do not want to move any more amendments.

THE CHAIRMAN: We obviously cannot vote here by numbers. We must take the Australian view, and the New Zealand view, and the United Kingdom view.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I cannot agree to that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would you be satisfied to record your dissent? We must get on.

MR. COX: Provided your dissent is recorded. I suppose that would satisfy you?

MR. BELCHER: The scope of the resolution is too restricted altogether. What I mean is this: Assuming there is a place located in a ship which is altogether an improper kind of place, where light and ventilation cannot be adequately provided for, and that place by an expenditure of a very small amount of money (assuming in the first place there is just the bare amount of space allowed) could easily be made all right. With soap and paint and so on you can make the place clean and sanitary, but you cannot make the place proper for a man to live in unless you enlarge it and light it better. It is largely a matter of space, and what I wanted to see inserted in any resolution carried in connection with this matter is that where it is possible to do so reasonably, as Mr. Hughes has put it, the shipowners should be compelled to enlarge the crew's quarters, in order to give them the full amount of space.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you not satisfied to leave that to the Minister?

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Not at all.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I am inclined to think that the first resolution, as amended in two or three ways, is the one I like the better.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: The whole thing is this: that if that motion is given effect to there will be practically no alteration whatever made in any existing ship.

MR. COX: What are your Ministers about?

HON. W. M. HUGHES: What Mr. Belcher said was perfectly right; if you give an hour before the inspector comes, the latrine and bilge water and all that sort of thing—offensive effluvia and so on—will be got rid of, but the moment the inspector is out of the way it will be worse than ever.

MR. COX: But you cannot make 72 feet into 120 feet in an hour, and you cannot make your bath-houses in an hour.