

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

10. Clauses in Articles of Agreement.

Motion by Mr. Belcher "that it be a recommendation from this Conference to the Board of Trade to ascertain and investigate the various clauses attached by shipowners to the articles of agreement signed by the crews of vessels. This with the view of securing uniformity in this respect, and also establishing the principle of equity as between employer and employed."

11. Resolutions of Conference.

Motion by Sir Joseph Ward "that the Imperial and Colonial Governments concerned be requested to introduce legislation to give effect to the resolutions of the Conference in cases where legislation is necessary."

12. Colonial Shipping Acts and Royal Assent.

Motion by Sir Joseph Ward "that the fact of the Royal Assent having been given to a Shipping Act of the Commonwealth or New Zealand should be conclusive evidence for all purposes and in all Courts that such Act is not *ultra vires* of the Imperial Shipping Acts."

THE CHAIRMAN: I should like to know whether Sir Joseph Ward presses the first resolution, because I think on the whole it simply repeats the acknowledged state of the law at the present moment.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I would like to put it on record.

THE CHAIRMAN: Could not Sir Joseph leave out the Fiji and the Pacific Islands?

MR. NORMAN HILL: Does it not follow that the conditions imposed by the Australian and New Zealand law with regard to manning, applies to vessels engaged in their coasting trade?

THE CHAIRMAN: But this goes a little further than that.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I do not see any objection for this reason: Supposing a vessel comes to our country, surely it is in the interests of British ships for the Government to see that the men are being paid the same wages.

MR. NORMAN HILL: We are so entirely opposed to this theory of the Government fixing the rate of wages that surely it is hardly reasonable to expect us to support any proposal which expresses approval of that principle. We have accepted the facts that the Commonwealth and New Zealand can make what laws they please for this particular class of vessels, and I do not think we can be asked, in reason, to say more than that.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I do not think it says anything further.

MR. LLEWELLYN SMITH: We have adopted a resolution defining the class of vessels to which the Australian or New Zealand law should be applicable. This is either to rescind or extend that resolution, or is superfluous.

MR. PEMBROKE: How does this go farther?

SIR JOSEPH WARD: The resolution passed originally applies to vessels registered or trading; this would apply to a vessel that was not registered or trading. I only want to say this goes farther than anything we have got.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Supposing you have one man short, or supposing they come out two men short, and they ship two men, do you propose it to extend to these two men?

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Yes.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: You claim the right to fix the rate of wages for residents in the Commonwealth.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: Is it worth while pressing it?

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Would there be any objection to my putting in the words "be paid the current rate of wages of New Zealand"?

MR. NORMAN HILL: I do not think it reasonable to pass any such resolution. Surely we can only be asked to agree to the Colonial law. We do not want to express any approval of what we believe to be a hopelessly wrong thing.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I have a case in my mind that I do not see British shipowners ought to oppose under any conditions. I have a case where a foreign vessel

comes and trades. We do not suggest it should be applied to any other countries than our own, which we govern. We do not suggest you should ask your Government to do it, but in our country that law applies generally, and our shipowners have very large interests at stake in Australia, and they ought to be considered as well as the oversea shipowners. I think our Government should have the right to say to an outside ship which came down there and paid its crew off and shipped a fresh crew—

MR. PEMBROKE: Do you intend it to apply to a few being shipped?

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Yes, if they engage in the trade.

MR. NORMAN HILL: We were told yesterday, if I may say so, rather brutally, that it did not matter to Australia what happened to us in our other trades by way of retaliation for what you do. We get no help from our Government in the way of reserved trade. The only thing we can rely upon is the principle the law of the flag governs on an oversea voyage; that is the only hope we have. If we sit here approving of your conduct to legislate for those ships, you won't suffer, but we shall.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I hope the remark of anything in the shape of brutal treatment does not apply to me.

MR. NORMAN HILL: No; but we were told Australia did not mind what happened.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: This is an important matter from the British shipowners' point of view, and I am just as anxious as they are to hear the matter intelligently discussed. I want to say that, rightly or wrongly, we look upon the trade of the Pacific Islands and the Fiji as a boat trade. We are not looking away from those Islands, but there is a very large trade done with the Islands from New Zealand, and it is a continuous trade, and also from Sydney. Now what we are trying to do is to give a measure of protection to very large local shipping interests against the casual man who comes along and gets into competition with them. I am thoroughly in accord with Mr. Norman Hill when he says that we should not attempt to interfere beyond our own borders, that we should legislate within our own jurisdiction; but we have a number of Islands in the Pacific which we control.

MR. COX: Yes; but the other ships cross the ocean to get there, and something is required to be done to protect that trade.

MR. NORMAN HILL: If you cannot interfere with oversea shipping, does it not come to the question of bringing Fiji into your coasting trade?

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: Is it necessary to pass a resolution of this sort, when the Commonwealth admittedly has that power?

SIR JOSEPH WARD: But New Zealand has not. You have it, and if you have it, that is the reason you should support it.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: New Zealand has the power of fixing the wages.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: We have a number of small steamers and trading vessels, and these shipowners may find themselves in the position of their whole trade being dislocated by foreign ships.