

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: It is not No. 2 at all; it is No. 1.

THE CHAIRMAN: That has been withdrawn. Yours has been ruled out. That is certainly a question for the Great Conference.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: But you will hear me before you rule it out, will you not?

THE CHAIRMAN: I confess I thought it had been discussed very fully already.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: The understanding was, with all deference to you, sir, that I should add words to it that would limit its application.

THE CHAIRMAN: If you are under that impression, certainly.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I should like to add these words now. The motion of Sir Joseph Ward asserted a right that we already have.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: We have not got it. You may have it, but we have not.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Well, we have. If New Zealand has not, of course that is quite different. However, the resolution is:—"That Australian conditions should apply to all ships engaged in trading to and from any port in the Commonwealth and the Islands of the Pacific." As to the nature of the trade, enough has been said about that. It is very important to us. We are the chief parties engaged in it. It is a very important thing to us that we should retain this trade and should have an opportunity to extend it, and I would add these words:—"That this resolution does not apply to vessels carrying merchandise consigned direct to or from an oversea port when carried by an oversea vessel."

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I do not agree with that. We have that power now.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Quite so; no doubt we have the power.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: You are proposing to take away the power.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I do not propose to do anything of the sort; I merely wish to get this Conference to express approval of this. Our power, I apprehend, the Conference can neither add to nor take away from—not a jot or a tittle, any more than we can alter the British Constitution.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: If you add the words you are proposing to add now, that restricts at any rate the obligation we would be under if we agreed to that—preventing us from dealing with ships that were not trading to and from, but were oversea ships.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: It is "carrying merchandise consigned direct."

THE CHAIRMAN: Would you mind, Mr. Hughes, confining now what you have got to say to the point of order, because my opinion is—subject to what you may say—that this is not a subject for us to discuss, but is a large question of jurisdiction, which ought to be debated at the Imperial Conference, where all the Colonies would be represented, and where the heads of the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office would be present.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Perhaps you will let me take No. 2 now, because it was with reference to what I said, and what Mr. Llewellyn Smith said in reply thereto in your absence, that I tabled this motion No. 2 to bring up this very question of the rights of this Conference—that it has power to deal with all questions affecting British legislation and the British Mercantile Marine—especially all questions affecting legislation in connection with ships trading to and from Australia and the Southern Seas.

THE CHAIRMAN: I draw a distinction between shipping legislation and questions which raise matters of jurisdiction. I am just thinking rather of the composition of the Conference. Now, this is not a Conference that can debate, I think, a big question like practically the attachment of the Isles of the Pacific to the Commonwealth for the purpose of legislation. I

certainly do not think we can debate that. Here we have the representatives of the shipowners. We have not got the Chief of the Colonial Office here; we have not got the Chief of the Foreign Office here. Canada is absent; Natal and the whole of South Africa are absent; and we really could not discuss a very large question of this sort, that would mean placing the Islands of the Pacific practically under the control of the Australian Commonwealth as far as shipping legislation is concerned, without having the whole thing debated at an Imperial Conference. No. 2 I put in a different category. My objection to No. 2 is that we cannot here recommend the application of a principle to all British ships where Canada is absent. If you confined it to the United Kingdom, Australia, or New Zealand, then it would be a different matter.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Will you allow me to just draw your attention to the order of leave, as it were?

THE CHAIRMAN: I have just heard something, Mr. Hughes, which I should like to mention before you proceed. I understand that there is a resolution dealing with this question down for the Imperial Conference, and I think it would be exceedingly undesirable that we should debate it having regard to that fact. It must be debated there, I understand. It is down on the agenda.

MR. HAVELOCK WILSON: Which resolution are we dealing with? We appear to be jumping from the Pacific and the Islands to manning, and from manning back to the Pacific.

THE CHAIRMAN: No, Mr. Hughes is now debating his first motion.

MR. HAVELOCK WILSON: Why is No. 2 dragged in?

HON. W. M. HUGHES: If you will allow me, Mr. Havelock Wilson, I will tell you. The President declines to allow me to do anything but debate the point of order. Well, on a point of order, I apprehend one can bring forward any argument to show that it is in order, and I was merely stating that No. 2 was tabled by me in response to a statement made by Mr. Llewellyn Smith when he was presiding, that he would prefer that the matters then brought up should be discussed in the presence of the President of the Board of Trade. What I said then, was that we were invited here for certain purposes. The correspondence shows very clearly how and why this Conference was called together; it shows the objections urged by the shipowners at considerable length, both as to our rights and as to the expediency of our insisting upon our rights, and it is perfectly clear from this that we were called together to secure uniformity as far as possible in shipping legislation. Now with regard to the despatch on page 79 from Mr. Lyttelton to Governor-General Lord Northcote, there is a copy of the report prepared for the Shipowners' Parliamentary Committee by Messrs. Weightman and Pedder, solicitors and secretaries to the Liverpool Shipowners' Association; and Mr. Lyttelton points out in paragraph 3 of his despatch that "His Majesty's Government will be glad if these documents can be laid before the Royal Commission which is now considering the Navigation Bill"—as they were. In paragraph 4 he says: "They feel, however, that the larger questions raised in them should no longer be allowed to remain without an attempt at a more general solution than can be effected by any one part of the Empire alone."

MR. COX: I am sorry to interrupt, but I want to make quite clear my position here.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just half a moment. Please let Mr. Hughes conclude his argument.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: "The difficulties surrounding the question of the conditions which are to govern merchant shipping under the British flag cannot, in their opinion, be properly met by a continuance without modification of the existing system, under which the several parts of the Empire may, and do, legislate with different results on many important matters in which uniformity is desirable. The introduction of the Commonwealth Bill and the recent passage of a comprehensive Act in New Zealand have led His Majesty's Government to the conclusion that the time has now