

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

MR. HAVELOCK WILSON: I can only promise the Board of Trade that they will hear more about this later on in the House.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I shall not insist. I do not see it will affect the matter. It cannot prejudice the matter just to put "this applies to deck and stoke-hold."

MR. MILLS: I may say that I am interested in Australia also, and I know the views of Australian shipowners with regard to this matter, which was very fully gone into before the Commission, of which Mr. Hughes is the able exponent here. This question of fixing a number of tons per day was very strongly objected to by shipowners in Australia, for the reasons stated by Mr. Norman Hill, that the conditions in each ship were quite different. In one ship the seamen and firemen together can easily handle 5 tons, while in other ships 3 tons would be a hard day's work. It is impossible to fix anything like a standard scale. For that reason they objected even to $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons being looked upon as the standard scale. The shipowners there are quite willing that the scale should be decided by some authority, and that each ship should be considered on its merits; either by the Departmental officers or by an Advisory Committee to be appointed.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: A Committee was what they recommended.

MR. MILLS: Mr. Hughes admits that a Committee is advisable, but he lays stress upon the point that they must have a standard to go by, and that is $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons a day. I have had opportunities of discussing the matter with Mr. Hughes, and have pointed out that if $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons a day is fixed as a standard, and a Committee is appointed with power to vary it in some degree, that Committee as a matter of fact will go little beyond the $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons. They will not consider themselves at liberty to consider the position of a ship in which 5 tons a day would be a fair day's work. The result of fixing $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons a day as a standard would be an enormous increase in the manning of ships on the Australian coast, and they would be compelled in many cases to carry useless men for whom there is no work.

THE CHAIRMAN: That is not pressed as part of the proposition. It is simply now the general principle.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: We have got a ship running between Melbourne and Launceston, which has an apparatus by means of which all the ashes are thrown out.

MR. MILLS: We have 20 or 30 ships fitted with it.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I wanted to know whether that was a saving of labour.

MR. MILLS: It must be; otherwise the men would have to put the ashes out by hand.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I just wanted to know. That is a case where there may be a lowering of the standard.

MR. MILLS: I will give you a still more striking case. A ship of large power and consumption would under that Act be obliged to carry what you call the minimum—what I call the maximum—number of men, regardless of whether it was steaming 2,000, 3,000, or 5,000 miles, or 500 miles, and regardless of whether she was engaged in a trade between ports where she would be able to replenish her bunkers every day or two, when there would be little or no work for the trimmers to do, or whether she was steaming 5,000 miles or 20,000 miles, when she would require an army of trimmers to handle the coal. The same law would apply to a ship under those different conditions.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: That shows the advantage of having a Committee to consider everything.

MR. MILLS: When the ship is efficiently manned can only be decided by a Committee, and not by attempting to fix anything in the nature of the Australian standard like $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: We ought not to discuss this at all.

THE CHAIRMAN: I rather felt that we were entering into a discussion of detail.

MR. MILLS: It has been mentioned very freely.

THE CHAIRMAN: It was not pressed. We are all generally agreed as to the principle. I should like to carry a perfectly unanimous resolution here. I should like to have the representatives of the shipowners here with us, if we can. I have suggested to them that they might be willing to adopt the words of the Australian Bill—that is the old Bill—Section 206: "No ship shall be deemed seaworthy under this Act unless she shall be in a fit state as to number and qualifications of crew, including officers, to encounter the ordinary perils of the voyage then entered upon." I have left out all about cargo and ballast, which we have had already. That seems to put the thing very clearly, and I think that we might adopt that. Then we do not enter into a discussion as to tons of coal or horse-power or anything of that sort.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: We adopted practically the terms of the judgment in the case of *Hedley v. The Pinkney Steamship Company*.

THE CHAIRMAN: I left out the words in the Act about cargo and ballast, and simply confined it to the number and qualifications of the crew, including officers. It will read: "No ship shall be deemed seaworthy unless she is in a fit state as to number and qualifications of the crew, including officers, to encounter the ordinary perils of the voyage then entered upon."

HON. W. M. HUGHES: There is only one thing which is lacking there, and that is all mention of a definite basis. Now it is this very definite basis that I thought was a new principle with the Board of Trade, but which they say is not a principle at all.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I am prepared to accept that after the remarks of Captain Chalmers.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: After the statement of Captain Chalmers I am perfectly prepared to accept that, with that interpretation put upon the section.

MR. BELCHER: Before this matter goes to the vote, I want to say a word upon it, seeing that I come from a Colony where a manning scale is in existence.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you accept this?

MR. BELCHER: No, I do not accept it at all; and I am going to give my reasons for it.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: You can keep that manning scale still if you like. We do not interfere with that.

THE CHAIRMAN: We do not interfere with it at all.

MR. BELCHER: I quite understand that.

THE CHAIRMAN: And we do not interfere with the Australian proposal about coal.

MR. BELCHER: I understand there is no attempt to interfere with any legislation we have in existence in New Zealand. The proposal before the Conference is that there shall be a suggestion made to the British shipowners that they should establish a minimum manning scale of some description. My own opinion, as a practical seaman, is that the minimum that has been suggested by Captain Chalmers for the deck purposes is altogether inadequate. It has been stated here that any vessel over 700 tons—

MR. HAVELOCK WILSON: 7,000.

MR. BELCHER: 700 tons—is fully manned, no matter what her capacity above 700 tons is, provided she has got three men in a watch.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Three men in the deck watch, is it not?

MR. BELCHER: That is the statement made by the responsible official of the British Board of Trade. I say as a practical seaman that that is altogether inadequate, and I shall not agree under any circumstances to that being the minimum.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is not. We are not pressing it.