

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

THE CHAIRMAN: The condition with regard to the mail contract is a different thing. That is a subsidy from the State.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: This does not apply to subsidies granted by the Commonwealth or New Zealand in respect to services rendered to those States. Would you put this proviso in: "Provided that this rider does not apply to the subsidies granted for services rendered to the Commonwealth or New Zealand"?

THE CHAIRMAN: You might have endless provisos like that.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I would like Mr. Hughes to vote for it as well as myself. I do not want a division. My wish is to have it as originally intended. But in order to get it unanimous I want to give something, so long as it is clearly understood, as I said just now, that this restriction is not one detrimental to either Australia, New Zealand, or to Great Britain. That is what I want to be clearly understood.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: It is well to be plain with the Conference; there is no guarantee that the Australian Parliament will not restrict its coasting trade to those persons employing only white seamen.

MR. LLEWELLYN SMITH: That is your own coasting trade.

THE CHAIRMAN: This is the British trade. This is an Imperial resolution, and that is why I think it is very important. Here is a resolution proposed by Sir William Lyne which will have Imperial effect if it is to be carried, and therefore I think, if I may say so, that it would be very wise if you could see your way to make a few verbal concessions of this sort, which would enable us to get a perfectly unanimous resolution, so as to carry all parts of the Empire along with us. I quite agree that with regard to your home trade, the Australian trade, you may do things which we cannot possibly do here. I want you to take into account the difficulties of our great international mercantile marine.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: Would you put in that the resolution would not affect any right which Australia may have in regard to her own coasting trade?

THE CHAIRMAN: You do not want that. We do not propose to interfere with that at all. This is an Imperial resolution, which is a very different thing.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: It appears that because a thing is called an Imperial resolution one has to swallow it although it is most disagreeable both in odour, taste, and everything else.

THE CHAIRMAN: No. You know perfectly well this is a resolution for our consumption, to put it quite bluntly. This is a hint to us. Sir William Lyne is not thinking about what is going to happen in Australia. He knows perfectly well that you can legislate there as you think proper. This is a hint to us that it is about time that we should encourage British sailors in British ships. We accept that, provided he will add those words.

MR. DUNLOP: We have swallowed some of your Colonial resolutions, and we did not like them a bit.

THE CHAIRMAN: This is for our own shipping. The shipowners have gone a very long way to meet you. It is an enormous thing for them to have accepted, even subject to these words, and I trust that Mr. Hughes will not be too insistent under these circumstances.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I am thinking, without wishing to say anything at all against shipowners, that the readiness with which they have accepted makes one believe there is nothing at all in it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, no. Last year they did accept a very important restriction, as Mr. Havelock Wilson pointed out. Employment was restricted on British ships to those who can understand the English language. That has an enormous practical effect, and the shipowners did not contest it.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I do not wish at all to stand out against the matured opinion of others. All I wish to have is your statement that this is not to be regarded in any way as limiting our own rights.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Everything that Mr. Hughes wants in the matter of mail contracts they can do under their own contracts, and we can all protect ourselves.

The resolution, in the following form, was then carried unanimously: "That every possible encouragement should be given by legislation or otherwise to the employment of British seamen on British ships, provided that this resolution does not contemplate the imposition of restrictive conditions."

MR. BELCHER: I move: "That this Conference is opposed to the employment of Lascars, Coolies, Chinamen, or persons of any other alien race on any vessels owned, registered, or chartered to trade in the Commonwealth or New Zealand." I think the resolution will commend itself to the Conference for the reasons that have been very ably advanced by Sir William Lyne, that is, that we should not encourage the employment of persons who will be of little use to us in the event of the Empire getting into serious trouble with another nation. The resolution just passed with regard to the employment of British seamen, or the encouragement of their employment, is a very good one. But I know of my own knowledge that the employment of persons mentioned in my resolution is on the increase, and anything that can be done to reduce their number, and to eventually exclude them altogether from British ships should in my opinion be given effect to. I do not think it can be said that these people are employed because Britishers cannot be obtained. My own impression is that if the shipowners treated their men a little differently, making their conditions a little better than they are, they would get a sufficient number of Britishers to man all the ships that are run by the British Empire. It has been said—whether it was said sincerely or not, I do not know—it has been remarked here by one of the British shipowners that it would be impossible to get a sufficient number of Britishers to man British ships. That is a statement which I can scarcely agree with. This resolution, as will be seen, confines the exclusion of Lascars, Coolies, and Chinamen from all vessels that are owned, registered, or chartered to trade in the Commonwealth or New Zealand. It is a well-known fact that in Australia there are a considerable number of vessels trading from Australia to Eastern ports, the shipowner practically deriving all his profits from the trade that that ship does between the East and Australia. I contend that under these circumstances the people of the country—

THE CHAIRMAN: I am sorry to interrupt you. I have a suggestion here that this affects India to such an extent that it would be quite necessary that we should have the India Office represented. We cannot get an India Office representative to-day. Therefore I propose that this should be postponed till to-morrow, when we can secure the attendance of an India Office representative, because it is very important that India should be represented here. Therefore I will pass on to the next resolution if you do not mind.

MR. BELCHER: Will you allow me to make a few remarks outside those individuals?

THE CHAIRMAN: You cannot. It is Lascars which are of the most importance, and you cannot make one speech now and another to-morrow when the representative of the India Office is here. You had better postpone it till to-morrow.

MR. BELCHER: Very well, provided you will give me an opportunity.

THE CHAIRMAN: Certainly.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I move "That the terms and conditions of the bill of lading at present in general use are in many respects unsatisfactory to shippers and consignees, and that in the interest of traders generally it is desirable that the Board of Trade should publish a form of bill of lading containing such reasonable conditions as in its opinion are sufficient to safeguard the rights of the shipper, shipowner, and consignee." I hope that the Conference will unanimously agree to this. It is a recommendation to the Board of Trade to endeavour to frame a model bill of lading. That would be done by them, I presume, after full investigation and inquiry, at which the shipowners would have the opportunity of being consulted. But I do know now that there is a great deal of feeling on the part of the people who are concerned outside of the shipowners with regard to the