

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

THE CHAIRMAN: Restrictive conditions would be, suppose we passed an Act of Parliament here, to say that you should not employ Germans, or Swedes, or Norwegians on British ships.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: The resolution as first proposed gives very different reasons. That long resolution which Mr. Norman Hill proposed really will not do anything which is going to cost shipowners more.

THE CHAIRMAN: We are not suggesting that. This is a suggestion we are making with a view to effecting a compromise. This is simply our suggestion with a view, if possible, to secure the support of the shipowners and get a perfectly unanimous vote, which will be very important to us. It is purely ours.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I want to say to Sir William Lyne that I think we ought to agree to that suggestion. I have no fear of the proviso with regard to the non-imposition of restrictive conditions. This Conference has already passed a number of resolutions with regard to seamen and ships, which we are trying to put into effect. Where there is a great change it is undeniable that it has to be a gradual process. If we make a statement that a particular thing is to be done, we shall get a number of people saying that it should be put into operation in a few months, and we shall create a wrong impression.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I do not propose that.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I think by putting this proviso in it will be all right.

MR. HAVELOCK WILSON: Might I call Sir William Lyne's attention to the Act of last year. I can assure Sir William Lyne that it will have a great effect in reducing the number of foreigners in future. It states that every seaman engaged on a British ship, either at a port in the United Kingdom or on the Continent between the River Elbe and Brest, must speak and understand the English language. That will have a big effect in reducing the number of foreigners.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think, if I may press Sir William Lyne—

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: Go on. You always press me to do as you like.

THE CHAIRMAN: The resolution is: "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. NORMAN HILL: It is encouragement and not penalty.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I do not quite understand how far those words go, "restrictive conditions." Do you mind my looking at the resolution?

THE CHAIRMAN: Certainly.

MR. HAVELOCK WILSON: "Restrictive conditions" would be to say that there must be so many Britishers on British ships. That would be all right in the United Kingdom, but a vessel might go to a distant port where you could not get Britishers to supply the number of men required. This would be restrictive conditions.

THE CHAIRMAN: They would have to leave the ship behind.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: That is why I wanted to know what was meant by "restrictive conditions." If one was dealing with this in an Act of Parliament, or a Bill before Parliament—suppose somebody was proposing this, and it was said, "the Conference was not in favour of imposing restrictive conditions," one would want to know what were the restrictive conditions.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Suppose a British shipowner sent a ship to Hamburg with a British crew, and when there the British crew were paid off—

THE CHAIRMAN: Or deserted.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Or deserted, and he had a contract to go on to Melbourne or New Zealand, and had to take on board a foreign crew there, I should say he was entitled to do that.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: So should I.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Unless you make some such reservation you would be imposing a condition which the shipowner would have to evade. Then he would be told he was breaking the contract.

MR. NORMAN HILL: We have been working for some time in Liverpool on a training school for lads for the Mercantile Marine. We have it well established, and we have got a certain number of boys and turn them out each year. We have been worrying the President of the Board of Trade for some time to give us a helping hand. We are having very good results and turning out very good lads, and this resolution will give encouragement to the President of the Board of Trade to worry the Chancellor of the Exchequer to get him to see that this is a national work, and to give us a helping hand.

MR. PEMBROKE: There are a great many good boys who are added to the number of seamen.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: There is one thing which is underlying in my mind in this question, and that is the education for the Mercantile Marine of men who can be taken by the Navy after going through that—naval cadets I think you call them. Now, the system which is adopted now, or which is allowed now, of educating so many foreigners, to my mind is absolutely antagonistic to Great Britain, because you are educating men who will fight against you. One of the strongest reasons why we all like to see the employment of British seamen is that you make a reserve which you can use in times of stress in favour of ourselves instead of in favour of our enemy. That is one of the reasons why I felt this question was one which should be dealt with very strongly if we can. Now I am quite prepared to say this, that if the proviso with regard to restrictive conditions is not meant in any way to take away from the effect of the first part of the resolution—

THE CHAIRMAN: I quite agree.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: If those words are put in, and that is understood so that I can use it hereafter, I agree.

THE CHAIRMAN: Certainly. Very well.

MR. HUGHES: I should like to give my reasons why I cannot vote for this. If that means restrictive conditions so far as employment of coloured persons is concerned—

THE CHAIRMAN: That is the next motion.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: It is all right. I see the next motion. I have kept that well in my eye. After all, there are persons who are not included in the next motion that I object to. We are speaking now of the whole of the British Mercantile Marine. Mr. Belcher's motion is confined to the coasting trade of Australia and New Zealand. I moved an amendment in the House imposing certain restrictions upon vessels carrying the Australian mails, and in consequence one company is now employing white persons in the stokehold instead of coloured persons in the stokehold. I take it that is a restrictive condition. If the "restrictive conditions" in your rider means that, I shall have to vote against it.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: But does it?

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: It means that they will get a subsidy if they employ white seamen.

THE CHAIRMAN: That is encouragement, surely.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: The difference is this. If you say you will give certain concessions as you did propose in your proposals before the Royal Commission to ships carrying 85 per cent. of British seamen, that is legislation, but not restrictive. This is as I take it. If on the other hand you say that no British ship should enter Australian ports unless she had 85 per cent. of British seamen, that would be a restriction.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: No doubt it is as you say. The only point is this. It may be we shall carry our mails on the poundage system yet, and it may be that we should give the preference by saying that all boats carrying foreigners, say the Nord Deutscher Lloyd, shall not carry our mails.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: There will be no subsidy given to a ship which does employ foreigners.