

## REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

SIR JAMES MACKAY : You can stop where you like. Then there are your horses.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE : Yes; you take our horses, I admit, and we can breed others.

SIR JAMES MACKAY : It would be a great pity to do anything to injure the trade between the two countries.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE : I do not think this will do so. I hope the trade will be done by means of white men instead of black.

MR. COX : As regards this question, everybody sympathises with the wish of Australia and New Zealand for the employment of Australian and New Zealand seamen; there is no question about that. If this is confined to the class of ships which Australia and New Zealand have the right to legislate for in their own waters, ships registered there, and so on, nobody can object to it. But there is one thing that I should strongly object to on behalf of the Colonial Office, and that is exclusion on the ground of colour. That question was fought out in 1897. I will read from a speech of Mr. Chamberlain made at the Premier's Conference in 1897, the part dealing with alien immigration: "One other question I have mentioned, and only one; that is, I wish to direct your attention to certain legislation which is in process of consideration, or which has been passed by some of the colonies, in regard to the immigration of aliens, and particularly of Asiatics."

SIR WILLIAM LYNE : What about our Alien's Law?

MR. COX : That is what I am coming to. You do not exclude on the ground of colour. This motion wishes to exclude on the ground of colour, and under that name, and that is going back on the compact and agreement which Australia and New Zealand have made, and honourably kept with this country for the last 10 years. Mr. Chamberlain proceeds: "I have seen these Bills, and they differ in some respects one from the other; but there is no one of them, except perhaps the Bill which comes to us from Natal, to which we can look with satisfaction. I wish to say that Her Majesty's Government thoroughly appreciate the object and the needs of the colonies in dealing with this matter. We quite sympathise with the determination of the white inhabitants of these colonies, which are in comparatively close proximity to millions and hundreds of millions of Asiatics, that there shall not be an influx of people alien in civilisation, alien in religion, alien in customs, whose influx, moreover, would most seriously interfere with the legitimate rights of the existing labour population. An immigration of that kind must, I quite understand, in the interests of the colonies, be prevented at all hazards, and we shall not offer any opposition to the proposals intended with that object, but we ask you also to bear in mind the traditions of the Empire, which makes no distinction in favour of, or against, race or colour; and to exclude, by reason of their colour, or by reason of their race, all Her Majesty's Indian subjects, or even all Asiatics, would be an act so offensive to those peoples that it would be most painful, I am quite certain, to Her Majesty to have to sanction it. Consider what has been brought to your notice during your visit to this country. The United Kingdom owns as its brightest and greatest dependency that enormous Empire of India, with 300,000,000 of subjects, who are as loyal to the Crown as you are yourselves, and among them there are hundreds and thousands of men who are every whit as civilised as we are ourselves, who are, if that is anything, better born in the sense that they have older traditions and older families, who are men of wealth, men of cultivation, men of distinguished valour, men who have brought whole armies and placed them at the service of the Queen, and have in times of great difficulty and trouble—such, for instance, on the occasion of the Indian mutiny—saved the Empire by their loyalty. I say, you, who have seen all this, cannot be willing to put upon those men a slight which I think is absolutely unnecessary for your purpose, and which would be calculated to provoke ill-feeling, discontent, irritation, and would be most unpalatable to the feelings, not only of Her Majesty the Queen, but of all her people. What I venture to think you have to deal with is the character of the immigration. It is not because a man is of a different colour from ourselves that he is necessarily an undesirable immigrant, but it is because he is dirty, or he is immoral, or he is a pauper, or he has some other objections which can be defined in an

"Act of Parliament, and by which the exclusion can be managed with regard to all those whom you really desire to exclude. Well, gentlemen, this is a matter, I am sure, for friendly consultation between us. As I have said, the Colony of Natal has arrived at an arrangement which is absolutely satisfactory to them." The arrangement which was made by Natal was accepted by Australia, accepted by New Zealand, and all your legislation has gone on those lines since. Mr. Belcher is departing from that in this motion. What he wants to do is to depart from the compact and arrangement which has been carried out by all of us for the last 10 years, and exclude Asiatics on the ground of colour. You can exclude them perfectly well on other grounds. You have kept them from immigration by other tests than that of colour, and you can do the same with regard to crews.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON : The resolution is only in favour of British seamen. Why not say so?

HON. W. M. HUGHES : Since that speech has been read, I want to say that there is no doubt that Mr. Chamberlain's despatch changed the course of legislation in the Commonwealth. It caused the education test to be put in, and I do not hesitate to say that that has done Australia—and perhaps the Empire too—ininitely more harm than anything else. We have achieved the reputation, not rightly at all, that we are trying to exclude white people. I suppose Australia is chiefly known to many people by the exclusion of the six hatters. That speech caused the hatters to be excluded.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON : No.

HON. W. M. HUGHES : Mr. Watson's motion to prevent the importation of coloured aliens—

HON. DUGALD THOMSON : The hatters were held up because they were under contract conditions.

HON. W. M. HUGHES : Was only lost by three. Had it been carried we should have heard nothing about the six hatters.

MR. COX : I daresay this may have been unpleasant to Australia. Things must be unpleasant to Australia occasionally, as they are to every other self-governing colony and every other country. But what I say is that this is a compact which was made ten years ago, and has been honourably kept; and, for my part, I am not going to take part in any resolution, or vote in favour of any resolution, which will upset that compact which has been acted on for the past ten years. That I absolutely decline to do.

SIR JOSEPH WARD : Will you allow me to make a suggestion? Mr. Belcher has moved a resolution, and has put his views on record, and in order to bring about unanimity, and meet what Mr. Belcher proposes, I would suggest that the resolution be altered to read as follows:—"That this Conference recognises the right of the self-governing dependencies to limit or exclude the employment of specified classes of persons on any vessel owned, registered, or chartered to trade in the Commonwealth or New Zealand." That omits all that is objectionable from the British point of view, with regard to a great country such as India; it omits the reference to race or colour, while doing exactly what Mr. Belcher wants.

MR. NORMAN HILL : Is not that repeating what has already been carried, which we agreed to?

SIR JOSEPH WARD : That had reference to the number of men, and Mr. Belcher has a different object. I think this removes the personal aspect which Mr. Cox objects to.

MR. NORMAN HILL : May I suggest that the colonies have told us with the utmost frankness that they will not discuss with us in any shape or form the policy of the laws which they make with regard to such matters as are within their jurisdiction? They have refused over and over again to accept any suggestions from us. They have told us they settle all those matters for themselves. Now, this is a matter which they claim a right to settle for themselves. They have passed a resolution affirming that right. They want us now to say (because, I suppose, they think there may be questions about the policy of excluding these races) that we agree to their views. I think that they are not entitled to ask us to take that position. If they are willing to discuss with us what is politic and what is impolitic in the laws which they make