

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: That is the system as regards miners.

MR. NORMAN HILL: And it was the system which the Home Office here pronounced in favour of.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: That matter is one of considerable importance to New Zealand as well, and I should like to say that the proposal of Mr. Norman Hill requires very grave consideration from our standpoint. When that report was made our seamen were all provided for. They had been provided for for many years before under the Workmen's Compensation Act. The clause reads as follows:—"Worker means any person of 'any age or either sex,' &c. (*Reads clause.*)"

THE CHAIRMAN: What is the date of that?

SIR JOSEPH WARD: 1900.

THE CHAIRMAN: You extended the Workmen's Compensation Act, did you?

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Yes. Now if this proposal, which requires from my standpoint to be very carefully considered, if this proposal that we are to look upon the recommendation made to the Home Government just as though there had not been a Workmen's Compensation Act in New Zealand or Australia, was suggested with a view of taking the place of what we have in our country, I could not agree. We provide for every trouble that might arise. We do not ask our sailors to give a contribution, and the colony itself does not give one-third, neither are we prepared to agree to anything of that kind. It would mean the dislocating of a law that works very well. I would suggest to Sir William Lyne that in the absence of a Workmen's Compensation Act such as we have, it might be desirable for him to get it. But I would suggest it would be far better for them to have their Act on lines similar to ours. If you get into the question of the Government giving one-third—

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I am not proposing the Government giving one-third.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Well, it is suggested that the sailors should give one-third.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I do not propose that.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: Sir William Lyne quoted a scheme from New South Wales.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: On the question of miners, we put them in a different category. In our case, we provide for the temporary disablement of a miner, because we create a fund from which the assistance to the miner is drawn, and then contributions are given by the miner, the men themselves and the Government of the country, and in the event of death, there is a lump sum paid to the widow, but that is quite a different category. I think it would be better for Sir William Lyne if he could see his way to drop No. 1.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I would put 1 and 2 together.

MR. BERTRAM COX: Might I suggest that Sir William should modify his motion to this effect:—"That the Australian Commonwealth Government be recommended to follow the example of Great Britain and New Zealand of extending the benefit of the Workmen's Compensation Act to seamen."

HON. W. M. HUGHES: The United Kingdom have no Workmen's Compensation Act at all. You could say "the adoption of."

MR. NORMAN HILL: We agreed to extending it last year contrary to the Report of the Home Office, and we think it an unjust law.

MR. COX: So far as that is concerned the British Government has adopted it. No doubt the British ship-owners did their best to represent their views. It was not adopted by the British Government and not adopted by the New Zealand Government, but it is obvious that Sir William Lyne should adopt something of the kind, and I will accept the suggestion of Mr. Hughes and word it as he suggests.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: That is the principle of the Act as amended.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I want to know more about that before I agree. I find that Act is only for ships registered in Great Britain.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: This is his proposal to extend it.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I know that, but it does not say one-third shall be paid by the Government.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: The whole of the trouble is that your No. 1 conflicts with No. 6. We have No. 6 in operation in New Zealand, and if you put that in operation in your country you would do all you want to do under No. 1.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: As a member of the Commission which decided that it had not sufficient evidence to adopt any scheme, might I point out to Sir William Lyne the difficulty about this compulsory insurance. I know there are tremendous difficulties in connection with compulsory insurance, difficulties that do not apply to miners who are resident in a country and who are, for the most part, citizens of that country. But with ships always changing their crews, men landing, going away, disappearing, foreigners on board those ships, black seamen on those ships, the difficulty of an insurance scheme is very great, and Sir William Lyne would have to put forward a scheme which we could adopt. But there is an insurance provided in the subsequent resolution, that of the Workmen's Compensation Act, and it has been adopted by Great Britain, and I agree with the proposal Mr. Hughes makes that we should indorse the adoption of that scheme, and then we do what Sir William Lyne proposes without committing ourselves to what might be an impossible scheme.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I suggest the following: "That the Australian Commonwealth be recommended to 'adopt the legislation providing for compensation to 'seamen, now in force in Great Britain and New Zealand.'" I think we should be very well satisfied if we could get that.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I do not feel disposed to agree to that at present. I think No. 1 does not interfere at all. It simply declares that a scheme of compulsory insurance for seamen is desirable.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: It may not be desirable if it is impossible.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: That is just what I do not want to leave open.

MR. MILLS: Does this mean "accident" or "life"?

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: Both.

MR. MILLS: They are quite a different thing.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: So far as seamen are concerned, I want an insurance scheme to protect the seaman if anything happens to him, more particularly for the sake of his wife and family. That is what I want, and I do not want to have it cut up in this way if it does not carry out what I want.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: The Workmen's Compensation Act does do that.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I do not think it does. So far as accident is concerned, perhaps it does, but not so far as life.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I will put the amendment:—"That the Australian Commonwealth be recommended to 'adopt the legislation providing for compensation to 'seamen, now in force in Great Britain and New Zealand.'" That is the amendment. The original proposition as moved by Sir William Lyne is:—"That 'a scheme of compulsory insurance for seamen is desirable.'"

MR. BELCHER: Before the amendment is put, I would like to say this in connection with this compulsory insurance that, while I recognise Sir William Lyne is actuated by most humane sentiments in suggesting that this scheme should be put into operation, as a practical seaman I see immense difficulties in the way of establishing this scheme. I do not think it could operate properly unless this suggestion was agreed to by the shipowners right throughout the Empire. The difficulties that have