

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

introduced into our legislation which places British shipping in a worse position than foreign shipping. I believe Sir Joseph Ward is of the same opinion, and I think that ought to be quite sufficient. He represents one Government, and I have no doubt those who are with him will agree that should be done. That ought to be enough without putting a resolution on paper. It is because I think it is superfluous and would be ignored.

THE CHAIRMAN: I know. But I am certain if Sir William Lyne knows that it will reassure the shipping community here, he won't object to a resolution of this kind appearing in the report.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: Supposing Parliament says we are going to do it no matter what I say, then they would go directly opposite to a resolution of this kind. Still I do not think it is wise.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I will tell you why I am opposed to it. I am for giving British ships preference in every way over foreign ships, and to do all in our power to give them preference. But as a matter of law, we sometimes find it impossible to apply that to a foreign ship in the same way as we can do to a British ship; but we can in other ways handicap a foreign ship greatly in favour of a British ship. If you pass this resolution:—"That the obligations imposed by Australian or New Zealand law on shipping registered in the United Kingdom should not be more onerous than those imposed on the shipping of any foreign country," we get into a position where we cannot expect to procure the King's assent to our legislation because we would get into a position of legislating on a foreign ship, which you know could not be assented to. If you are prepared to put in the words "British Government" so that it will read "That the obligations imposed by the British Government," put the British Government in with us so as to insure when we do deal with a foreign ship they will do the same, then there is uniformity of action and procedure, and uniformity of treatment to the various ships. But you are tying our hands by imposing upon us an obligation that we are not to impose upon foreign ships conditions other than we do upon a British ship. We are strongly in favour of British ships, but if you pass the resolution as it stands you tie our hands.

MR. NORMAN HILL: We attach great importance to these terms. We have heard with very great relief the statements made by Sir Joseph Ward and Sir William Lyne as to their intentions, but we, the British shipowners, have had to sit here to take the punishment that has been given to us. Now, of course, these statements have had a very great effect, but they have not been communicated to the people whom we are representing, and the result of the Conference certainly has not been to commend the wisdom of the representatives of the British shipowners to the British shipowners generally, and if we go away without having had published these very kindly sentiments that have been expressed so clearly and so forcibly, it will increase our difficulty. Therefore, we do trust that Australia and New Zealand will see their way to put in the form of a resolution, the opinions which the British delegates have put down on this notice.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I will move as an amendment: That the word "British" be inserted before "Australia." We should not be put in a different position to the British Government.

MR. LLEWELLYN SMITH: Would you also add "registered in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand?" At present we are only asking equality of conditions imposed by your laws on our shipping, not on your shipping.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I want all British ships.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: If you pass the resolution, I am afraid it complicates matters. It almost is a direction not to put anything more onerous on the foreign ships.

MR. LLEWELLYN SMITH: That is not intended.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: It makes for equality. Now this very Act that I was referring to just now, it is held up at the present moment because it provides for an advantage to an English ship against the foreigner. And that is what we want to do so far as we possibly can; we want to give an advantage to the British ship.

THE CHAIRMAN: This is not superfluous at any rate. Sir Joseph Ward contemplates certain cases where he is imposing on British ships that which he would not impose on a foreign ship.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I would not, if I had power.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: The same here.

MR. NORMAN HILL: Would it be covered if the resolution read as follows:—"That the obligations imposed by the laws of the United Kingdom, Australia, or New Zealand on shipping registered under their flags should not be more onerous than those imposed on the shipping of any foreign country in the ports of those States."

MR. LLEWELLYN SMITH: That is an enormous extension.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: The position is this. I do not know whether there are any treaty rights, but supposing there are any treaty rights by which any one State is bound to any foreign power, or supposing hereafter it entered into a treaty, say with Germany or America—it is conceivable and Canada contemplates it—suppose then that Australia entered into a treaty with America, and one of the terms of the treaty was "That a ship should be allowed to trade on the Australian coast subject only to the conditions imposed by the United States laws." Then we should have to allow all United Kingdom shipping to come under the same terms. Well, then we should have to allow all other favoured-nation shipping to come in under the same terms. But that simply means we could never enter into a treaty with any country at all. Because that would include nearly every maritime nation in the world.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: You must if we have assented to that in the first place.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I am supposing that we enter into a commercial treaty with, say, America or some other country to which Great Britain may not assent, because it would not affect Great Britain—it might be an arrangement as to the Pacific Coast trade, or something of that sort—or the Island we should have to extend those provisions to all other ships, and so our legislation would be null and void.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: Why should we make a treaty with America that is more advantageous?

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I do not know why we should. I am not saying why we should.

HON. DUGALD THOMSON: Your argument depends on that, that we make a treaty with America which is more advantageous to the ships of America engaged in a particular shipping trade than to British ships that might enter that trade. Surely it is a very reasonable thing that there should be some safeguard against that to the British ships engaged in that trade.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: No doubt; but as a matter of fact, there is a trade between America and Australia, and it is conceivable there would be, with which British shipping could not compete. But, at any rate, this limits our right to make commercial treaties. Personally, I have gone so far as to suggest that there should be a rebate for British ships, of light, harbour, pilot dues, and we are entirely in favour of them not being subject to the coastal restrictions so far as mail steamers are concerned. But at the same time it is a different thing to say you must not do what we think proper in the matter. Once you do that, we can never enter into any treaties with any country at all; we are completely hampered.

THE CHAIRMAN: You know you pass any laws you like; but you must not impose worse conditions upon us than upon the Germans. That is all we ask.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I know that. But the obligations imposed on shipping registered in the United Kingdom—that does not say coasting trade.

MR. LLEWELLYN SMITH: That is governed by Resolution No. 9.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I would be willing to say that all ships should be treated alike, whether Colonial, British, or foreign. Practically, that is what our Bill does.