

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: You are raising a question I am sorry to hear raised at the present time, because you are raising a question that has been underlying the whole of the Conference, as to whether we shall or shall not be allowed to make large ships conform to the same provisions that we make our own trading vessels, and if you are going to raise that question now, because that is underlying it, then it is a very serious matter.

MR. COX: It seems to me that is already covered by Resolution 9.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is only raised as a recommendation now.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I hope that recommendation will be worded with some consideration.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am sorry to hear that.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I want to prevent the recommendation, Mr. President.

MR. LLEWELLYN SMITH: I certainly can be no party to reopening Resolution 9. We passed it, and Mr. Norman Hill moved a rider which was not accepted, and therefore, as far as this Conference is concerned, we fully and frankly admit that we recognise your full right to adopt local conditions to these ships. All we wanted to do—and perhaps we could get a more felicitous mode of expressing it—is to suggest that in framing those conditions you should have in your minds the interests of the ship which only engages for a short time and for a small part of its business in this coasting trade, and not have your minds entirely upon the habitual coaster which is always engaged on the coast and derives all its revenue from the coast.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: We must not leave a loophole.

MR. LLEWELLYN SMITH: We are not asking for exemption, but in framing the conditions we ask that you should remember there are these two classes of ships to be considered, not only the habitual coaster, but the incidental.

MR. FELCHER: These vessels are constantly on the Australian coast. As soon as one vessel leaves Fremantle and goes to Sydney, there is another vessel behind.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: The effect is just the same as if some ships are on always.

MR. BELCHER: So far as the wages are concerned, let me have a word to say in regard to that matter. I know of a case that happened on the New Zealand coast where one of the New Zealand Company's or Shaw Savill steamers traded on the coast for a considerable time. Before that vessel left New Zealand, an indorsement was made on her articles that she was trading on the coast, and when the vessel came to Great Britain, the men expected to be paid the coasting rate of wages for the time they did coasting work. But the shipowners objected to pay them, and contended that no alteration could be made on the contract entered into in Britain. The case was taken before the Courts, and the men had to go without the wages. So it appears to me there is a very urgent necessity that the stipulations that have been mentioned by Mr. Hughes and by Mr. Havelock Wilson should be inserted on the articles of all these ships, so that it is possible to enforce the conditions they would have to comply with while on the New Zealand coast.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: I want to refer to a clause in our Act, the subsection of Clause 75. It makes the position quite clear by law in our country. The subsection is as follows: "Provided that this section shall not apply to 'ships arriving from abroad with passengers or cargo, but not trading in New Zealand further or otherwise than for the purpose of discharging such original passengers or cargo in New Zealand and their shipping fresh passengers or cargo to be carried abroad.'" I think that this resolution, No. 5, ought to be made clear that it does not apply to coastal work in the ordinary way. In our country I would look upon it as a needless handicap; if a vessel has a through bill of lading to touch at a dozen ports, we would give them the same facilities to land their cargo in such a way as they thought best; but we would look upon it as an unfair thing to the steamers locally owned if an oversea liner could come along without the handicap that our local vessels have of complying with

our requirements for our own rates of wages—that they should actively engage in competition would be unfair. My opinion is, the whole difficulty might be provided for not by contract but by statute law, and what the Australian delegates want I believe could be got over by inserting the word "needlessly" before "handicap," and the word "oversea" before "trade."

HON. W. M. HUGHES: That is what I am proposing—"That the conditions should not be such as to handicap them in their oversea trade."

SIR JOSEPH WARD: Put "needlessly" before "handicap," then you are meeting the whole difficulty. There is one thing in preventing them and another in needlessly handicapping them when they are complying with your conditions as they apply to their own coast.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: They want to equalise the payment from London to Australia and back, including the coast.

MR. NORMAN HILL: I have not said that.

SIR JOSEPH WARD: What I understand upon that point is that the liners who are called upon to have conditions similar to those imposed upon the local traders, that they should not have excessive conditions imposed upon them. That is as I understand it. If I am wrong, then I misunderstand the position. My opinion is, you ought to put in the word "needlessly." You get all you want. Our law and your law are going on the same lines. It is not a matter of contract; it is a matter of law.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: How can you prevent it when they pay £10 to a man going to Australia and back again? And we make them pay double while they are trading on the coast, but the total they pay is £10.

MR. FERNIE: Who suggested that?

MR. COX: It was suggested by Sir William Lyne.

MR. NORMAN HILL: All I said was that the big vessel which comes for a limited amount of cargo and passengers, I say that the whole of that crew should not be subjected to those conditions if she is to be put on a position of equality with the vessel trading on the coast.

SIR WILLIAM LYNE: I take it what Mr. Norman Hill meant was that only a portion of the crew should receive the additional wages—is that what you meant?

MR. NORMAN HILL: Yes, it must be adjusted on some such basis.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: I venture to say, this resolution is quite unnecessary if it is not to do more than to place the British shipowner not on a footing of equality, but to give him a very unfair handicap, or to put the Australian in a very unfair handicap, because Resolution 3 says: "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." If you like to improve that now and say, "That the obligations imposed by Australian or New Zealand law on shipping registered in the United Kingdom shall not be more onerous than those imposed on the shipping of Australia or New Zealand," personally, I am perfectly prepared to accept that. We only want a fair and square deal. We don't want anything more than that.

MR. NORMAN HILL: It is the application. We are not challenging your right, but we say apply it equitably so as to secure the vessels being put on an equality.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: But we do do that.

MR. NORMAN HILL: Not if you enforce the whole of it.

MR. DUNLOP: Suppose you had twenty stewards for the purpose of the whole of the passengers, and you took two or three passengers on board at Adelaide, you have to pay the whole of the twenty stewards.

HON. W. M. HUGHES: When your ship calls at Fremantle or Albany, perhaps it takes only six, but it would have taken sixty if they had been there.

MR. DUNLOP: But the stewards are not there for these Australian passengers.