

4th Day.]

NAVIGATION LAW.

[2 June, 1911.]

Mr. BUXTON—*cont.*

unfairly with British vessels. So far as can be seen, therefore, the ideal of uniformity has been to a considerable extent attained, and further steps towards it are being taken. The Board of Trade will not relax their efforts in this direction, and it is to be hoped that the cordial co-operation of the Colonies will be obtained for such a very desirable end.

As to foreign subsidized ships, I have already said something about them, and they will be discussed on the other motion. But as a matter of fact, it is in the ordinary course against the policy of His Majesty's Government to subsidize British shipping except under particular conditions, because they believe they can hold their own without such subsidies.

As to equal trading advantages for British shipping, it is difficult to deal with this part of the resolution without knowing more definitely what is in the mind of the Australian Government. The Imperial Government are naturally desirous of obtaining equality of opportunity for British ships, and this object is, of course, borne in mind whenever general negotiations are in progress with any particular country.

As to the last two points, British seamen on British ships and conditions of employment on such ships, the principle underlying much of the most recent merchant shipping legislation of the Imperial Parliament has been that the former object—that is, the employment of British seamen on British ships—can be best attained by pursuing the method indicated in the latter. The Merchant Shipping Act, 1906, was intended to improve the conditions of merchant seamen generally by establishing a proper dietary scale for seamen and providing for the proper cooking of their food, by requiring enlarged and improved accommodation for seamen in British ships, by making further provision for repatriation and medical treatment, and by various other means. Further, the adoption of a language test was a measure likely to encourage the employment of British seamen, and it was believed that it was calculated to and would tend to increase the proportion of British seamen employed in British ships. The figures showing the number of British and foreign seamen employed in the British Mercantile Marine during the last few years confirm this view. I have already given the figures in reference to the matter, which show a distinct tendency in the right direction. It may be added that New Zealand has followed this Act very considerably in recent legislation, doubtless with the same object in view; and the Australian Navigation Bill now before the Commonwealth Parliament is based on similar lines. As regards the improvement of conditions in the mercantile marine, there are some points on which it would probably not be possible to arrive at actual uniformity with Australia and New Zealand. For instance, there is no statutory fixed rate of wages, &c., in the mercantile marine here, because as a rule they are matters of settlement between the owners and masters and seamen.

I have shortly put before the Conference the points we have taken up since the last Conference meeting, and I hope it is not an unsatisfactory record of the activities of the Board of Trade; and we are only too glad in all these matters, as far as we can, to act in conformity and in conjunction with the representatives of the Dominions.

Mr. BRODEUR: I have not got much to say on the motion which has been made by Mr. Pearce and by Mr. Fisher, and which is agreeable in its provisions. I think perhaps it would be better to postpone the adoption of this resolution until we have considered the one of which notice has been given by New Zealand, as to some of the laws of navigation and shipping. In the meantime, however, you will perhaps allow me to bring to the attention of the Conference the situation in which the Governments are concerning their navigation laws.

We were formerly under the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1854. Later on, as far as Canada is concerned, in 1867, by the British North America Act, we were given the power to legislate with regard to navigation and shipping. The provisions of the Imperial Merchant Shipping Act of 1854 were applying, of course, to Canada. However, we proceeded to make some provisions in our own legislation. Sometimes those provisions were passed with the consent of His Majesty in Council; sometimes also some amendments were