

10th Day.]

COMMERCIAL RELATIONS AND BRITISH SHIPPING. [16 June, 1911.]

Mr. FISHER—*cont.*

such as this, or some subsidiary Conference, dealing with matters of inter-Dominion interest, should not meet elsewhere than at the seat of Government, in London. These are matters hardly embraced within the proposition before us. Mr. Asquith smiles at the difficulty.

The PRESIDENT: All I say is that I do not think it is strictly relevant to this particular Resolution, but I am very glad to hear what you have to say about it.

Mr. FISHER: I do not want to carry that any further, but the question is whether this Commission shall be of such a character as would perhaps include Ministers, or men of the standing of Ministers, in the United Kingdom or in the Dominions, because I assure you that is an important point. I should not for one moment support a Resolution of this kind except under the belief that the men who compose the Commission shall be men of the very first order both in the United Kingdom and in the Dominions, because I assure you they will be treated with courtesy, but with indifference, unless that is so.

The PRESIDENT: We quite agree to that.

Mr. FISHER: That is what I have in my mind when I am speaking of men who are occupying leading positions in the United Kingdom, because, small as the communities of the oversea Dominions may be, they are just as proud as the proudest of those who exist in this part of the British Empire.

Altogether I think this proposal is a happy solution and a practical solution of a rather difficult question, and I hope it will commend itself to the Conference.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: I think that the proposal of Sir Wilfrid Laurier meets the position in a very practical way. The passing of either of the two Resolutions would really be a generalisation, and the outcome of them could not be of any practical use to the various portions of the Empire which Mr. Fisher in his motions was anxious to help. I recognise that a precedent to what is required in order to have practical results achieved is a very extended inquiry, and I think that Sir Wilfrid Laurier's proposal is a happy solution of what was intended to be achieved under the Resolutions submitted by the Commonwealth of Australia. What Sir Wilfrid Laurier is proposing is to my mind exceedingly important. I believe, after we have obtained the results of the Commission proposed under this Resolution for investigating and reporting upon the national resources of each part of the Empire, we will all be in a better position to deal with matters which, to a very large extent, can otherwise only be in the air respecting the different portions of the Empire; and, until we have practical information before us, we are really not in a position to ask our respective Legislatures to do what may be necessary in the shape of legislation, but I should hope we will be in that position as the outcome of an investigation of the kind proposed. The suggestion as to obtaining information regarding facilities regarding production, manufacture, and distribution is exceedingly important. I do not want in any way to refer to the local aspect of the cattle trouble as applicable to Canada, which is important to that Dominion, but there are matters in my own country which could, I think, with great advantage to the Empire be improved, and none of us are in a position to come to a decision upon them unless we had the results of a Commission that would take a year or two at the very shortest to inquire all over the Empire upon the various matters that they could, with much advantage, inquire into. If they do their work thoroughly, as I have no doubt they will do, then, I think, we ought to be able to help the development of trade very materially within the Empire. For my part I think that great care should be taken to see that the composition of this Commission is a good one, because upon that a great deal would depend. I have no doubt we shall have a little trouble in selecting suitable men in the oversea Dominions. We will have some trouble in finding men who possess the requisite qualifications, with impartial minds, as they require to have. But a Commission of the kind must be a strong and representative one. It will