

10th Day.]

ALL-RED ROUTE.

[16 June, 1911.]

Mr. FISHER: If the Conference will allow me, I do not want Sir Joseph to be under any misapprehension regarding our position. We are not in antagonism to New Zealand, nor to the Dominion of Canada; we are in hearty sympathy and co-operation with Canada, and, as he has stated, Queensland in the very early days subsidised a steamship line between Brisbane, Sydney, and Vancouver, and ran it for a long time. We have continued it up till lately. The present reciprocal arrangements between Canada and New Zealand give New Zealand a distinct advantage over the Commonwealth of Australia, and that is the reason why we are not co-operating in the present arrangement. The negotiations were closed by the two Dominions within their own rights about which we can make no complaint, not can New Zealand nor Canada make any complaint that we have not come into that. Further as my colleague reminds me, we have not closed the proceedings, and we might have a line of steamers either to Canadian ports or to the United States ports or to any other ports convenient for our trade to carry our goods and mails.

The other point is that previously this proposition, to my mind, was submitted to this Conference as a mail route largely—for speedy mail communication. The proposition to-day names a line of steamers of 10,000 tons, which obviously means not mail and passenger steamers only; the tonnage, I mean, puts it out of consideration that they would be run for mails and passengers across the Pacific. That is the reason I did not want to go into it. I took it rather from the actual words of the resolution than from what was said that it meant "That, for the purpose of carrying 'the above desideratum into effect, a mail service be established on the Pacific, 'between Vancouver, Fiji, Auckland, and Sydney, by first-class steamers of not 'less than 10,000 tons'" (it will be noted that from Vancouver to Fiji I dealt with before, and I need not deal with it again; that seems an impossible distance) "and capable of performing the voyage at an average speed of 16 knots." That is a greater speed than we can get from our Orient mail steamers at present running with their ships full, carrying passengers, and touching at all the ports en route. I want to assure Sir Joseph and the representative of the Dominion of Canada, that there is no unfriendly feeling in Australia to Canada. It is a matter of business, and there is very little sentiment in business when we are dealing with the affairs of our own countries.

The PRESIDENT: Do you desire to take the opinion of the Conference, Sir Joseph?

Sir JOSEPH WARD: I desire to take the opinion of the Conference on at least a part of this resolution. I want, without taking up the time of the Conference further, to make it perfectly clear that I do not regard anything Mr. Fisher has said as unfriendly to New Zealand, and I am sure he does not regard anything that I have said as unfriendly to Australia.

Mr. FISHER: It is a business question.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: Yes, and it is as a business proposition that I am urging it. The service running from Vancouver to Australia for the last 16 years was a service established by me with the Canadian Government in Ottawa in 1895 to run between Vancouver, New Zealand, and Australia. I went to Canada specially and arranged it when there, but owing to difficulties that cropped up New Zealand was finally left out and the service touched Brisbane instead, Sydney remaining the final port as I first arranged. Owing to the impossibility of Brisbane and Sydney being included as ports of call in Australia, New Zealand had to remain out 16 years. The Commonwealth Government recently wanted Brisbane continued besides Sydney, but it was an impossibility owing to geographical disabilities which exist on the Australian side to call at New Zealand too, and we are anxious to have that service continued, calling at New Zealand and Sydney only, as I have just indicated.