

16 June, 1911.]

TRADE AND POSTAL COMMUNICATIONS
AND SHIPPING CONFERENCES.

[10th Day.

Sir JOSEPH WARD—*cont.*

from England direct to the port which serves the district that port is in, with the result that the steamers going outward from the Old Country have frequently to call at three and four discharging ports. Looking at the position that the New Zealand producer is in, which is the one from our point of view in our country that we always consider, we are always working to obtain as low rates of freight as it is possible for us to get, bearing in mind the fact that we know that if we obtain a fictitiously low rate of freight for a short time, inevitably freights later go up and the consequences would be more disastrous to our people later on than if we obtained a fair rate of freight for the winter season and the summer season, with fair regularity and continuity. In our country we have no coastal rebates. If this system of rebate, the abolition of which is being urged both by South Africa and Australia, did not exist for the oversea trade in New Zealand, we would very soon put our producers who export frozen meat, sheep, and lambs, and those who export butter and cheese, in a position of having to pay possibly double the rates of freight upon their frozen article, and I am going to show you why. If there were some legitimate system in operation which, while not injurious to our producers as a whole, would allow us to maintain a line of four independent refrigerated steamers of considerable cost as against the ordinary tramp steamer, which would come in and take away the class of trade outside the frozen meat and the butter and cheese, leaving that alone for the high-class expensive steamers to carry on—if the ordinary tramp steamer came along spasmodically, with a larger freedom of rate and in any case not requiring refrigerated steamers, they could probably carry the non-refrigerated cargo at perhaps 5s. a ton less for a short time to the Old Country, and in the meantime the high-class refrigerated steamers which are necessary for the preservation of the trade of New Zealand, from the point of view of our frozen meat and dairy produce, would require to have the freights considerably increased, possibly doubled, on our meat and our dairy produce exported, which would be ruinous to our country.

In the Bill for Prevention of Monopolies in New Zealand which, on behalf of the Government, I introduced last session and put on the Statute Book, on this very point of the difficulty from the position New Zealand is in, we had to be very careful as to what we did for fear of raising the freights upon the classes of produce which are two of the principal staple exports from our country; and we had to be very careful what we did for fear of bringing about direct injury to that class of our producers. We do not, as I say, give a subsidy to any of these steamers which carry our frozen meat, wool, dairy produce, or any of our cargoes to the Old Country, and we have no intention of doing that, so far as the New Zealand Government is concerned, but the difference between New Zealand and Australia, and it may apply to South Africa for all I know to the contrary, is that we have no such thing in our country as a deferred rebate system on the coastal trade.

Sir D. DE VILLIERS GRAAFF: There is in South Africa.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: There is not in New Zealand; we have no such thing in New Zealand as a deferred coastal rebate system.

Mr. BATCHELOR: Is not that because you have practically only one company?

Sir JOSEPH WARD: We have two large trading companies, one hailing from Australia and one owned in New Zealand, and besides we have local steamship companies carrying on business, but there is no such thing as a rebate on our coastal trade at all. But the necessity for our home export trade is that we require refrigerating steamers and cargo carriers combined of large capacity for the purpose of taking frozen meat and general cargo from New Zealand; they must be large in order to meet the requirements of the people in the dif-