

10th Day.]

TRADE AND POSTAL COMMUNICATIONS
AND SHIPPING CONFERENCES.

[16 June, 1911.]

Sir JOSEPH WARD—*cont.*

ferent centres, to go to a number of ports, not so many inwards as they require to go to outwards. If we had the system which Mr. Pearce suggests—and it may be perfectly right from the Australian standpoint—of allowing any one and every one to come as they thought proper without refrigerators on board their steamers to carry away the unrefrigerated exports from our country in comparatively small tramp steamers, we could only do it by paying much higher rates on the frozen meat and dairy produce than our producers are now called upon to pay when a steamer carries both general cargo and frozen cargo.

With regard to the contracts for dairy produce from New Zealand, they have always been carried without the intervention of the Government; without any interposition on its part the freight for the exportation of dairy produce from New Zealand is arranged direct by the dairy companies and the shipping lines, and is competed for between the different companies with a view to their getting it on the best terms they can. We do not require to do what Australia is doing under their contract with the Orient Line. Their position is different to ours. There should be every effort made to prevent injustice being done or unfair impositions being put on the producers or on the shippers. I want to make it clear that I do not believe that the primage which was mentioned by Sir David Graaff should be dispensed with in any country without full consideration. I believe it would be a mistake for South Africa to abolish it, at least if the primage is rightly used. If the primage referred to was going into the pocket of the shipowner, then there is a great deal to be said for not having it; but a large portion of the primage is used where the shipping firm has not got its own organization in existence for the cost and expense of securing freight, just as a wholesale merchant sends his travellers out over the country for the disposition of goods or where a man is a large purchaser and requires to send his men out to obtain satisfactory purchases.

Sir D. DE VILLIERS GRAAFF : No.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : A portion of it has to be used for the initial cost of actually carrying out the work of obtaining cargo. I do not know whether there is a different system of primage in your country, but that is, I think, the practice.

Sir D. DE VILLIERS GRAAFF : I will answer that later.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : As far as I know, that is the system in operation. We have had shipping fights in New Zealand in connection with our oversea produce to the Old Country, and we have had them for over 30 years to my own knowledge; and upon the whole we have got our export shipping business on a satisfactory footing. As a matter of fact, it is open to any one to come along with a refrigerated steamer, and if he can bring down the rates in our country he has a free and open field to do it in. I am not putting myself in the shoes of the representative of South Africa, very far from it, because I recognise from his speech that they have difficulties there of a nature quite sufficient to suggest that they should move in order to have them abolished, and an improved condition of affairs created—but in our country we have had our shipping fights for 30 years. We suggested twelve or fourteen years ago having State-owned steamers with the object of getting our trade on a basis that was satisfactory to our country as a whole.

I want to say, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, that I support the Resolution. I felt it necessary to make the matter clear as far as New Zealand is concerned. We cannot come into line upon all the points referred to by Sir David Graaff in the course of his speech, as some would not suit the conditions of our trade.

Sir E. MORRIS : I agree.