

11th Day.]

BRITISH AND FOREIGN SHIPPING.

[19 June, 1911.]

Sir JOSEPH WARD—*cont.*

Dominions. What does the Bill propose? I want to direct the attention of the Conference to what that Bill proposes. It proposes an alternative, and it is the alternative that is contained in this Bill, in connection with which I want to impress upon this Conference the importance of our giving effect to something of the kind unless we are going with our eyes wide open to see the destruction of the white officers, white engineers, white firemen, and white crews on board our ships that are a credit to the British flag, and certainly are prized very highly by the people in the countries where those ships are owned. This Bill proposes an alternative, as I have said, and the second clause in it, the operative clause, is to this effect: "Seamen employed in ships plying or trading from New Zealand to any port within the Commonwealth of Australia, or from New Zealand to the Cook Islands, shall be paid and may recover the current rate of wages for the time being ruling in New Zealand." Now, that is an operative clause which asks, in connection with British-owned steamers with sections of the British races on board them of a coloured nature, that those sections should receive the same rates of pay when those steamers are trading to and from Australia, between Australia and New Zealand, and round the coast of New Zealand, or to the islands that are attached to New Zealand.

That is what that Bill first provides for, and then comes clause 3: "(1) In the case of ships plying or trading from New Zealand to any port within the Commonwealth of Australia, or from New Zealand to the Cook Islands, which are manned wholly or in part by Asiatics, passenger tickets issued for passages from New Zealand, and bills of lading or shipping documents for cargo shipped in New Zealand, shall be liable in addition to any duty imposed under the Stamp Duties Act, 1908, to a stamp duty equal to twenty-five per centum of the amount of the passage money or the amount charged for freight." I want the Conference to particularly note the proviso in connection with this 3rd clause—it is that which I wish to direct special attention to. I admit at once, and I do not want any misunderstanding about it, that this 3rd clause contained in this Bill making provision for the stamping of tickets and bills of lading is, from the standpoint of what we are trying to give effect to, probably from the point of view put forth by Lord Crewe, practically saying that those ships are not to trade to our country.

I do not want to have any misconception in the mind of anybody as to what that means, because with the disabilities that is intended to impose upon them in clause 3 there can be no doubt that in turn they could not operate successfully against any of the existing lines after having a disability of the kind imposed against them. But it is the proviso I want to direct attention to which is contained in that Bill, and I repeat for the information of the gentlemen attending this Conference that this Bill is the cause of the production of the memorandum upon this important question to which Lord Crewe has so ably referred in the course of his speech: "Provided that where it is proved to the satisfaction of the Collector that the provisions of section two hereof are complied with on any ship, then the provisions of this section shall not apply to that ship." I want to tell the Conference what that means. That means that with regard to any British-owned ships which for reasons of their own find it necessary to employ a section of British people of a different colour to the white race, or even if they were British crews who have all the protection of the British flag under the conditions which the British Government in the position it occupies of having to do justice to all parts of the British Empire required to be observed, with that proviso in there, the clause which is intended to be a deterrent, clause 3, imposing a stamp duty on the bills of lading, would be inoperative so long as those ships under clause 2 paid the same rates of pay to Lascars or Asiatics or to British crews as have to be paid in the case of the ships plying or trading around New Zealand or from New Zealand to Australia.

In these circumstances I do want to earnestly appeal to this Conference. Neither I, as the head of the New Zealand Government, nor any of my colleagues, could stand by in that country and see the practical wiping out of the shipping interests there by the insidious undermining of the whole position—I do not use the word "insidious" in any objectionable sense—by men whose requirements are ever so much less, and whose standards of living are so different from what ours are, so that it would be putting our crews in the position of either being forced down to the same rates of pay in order to allow our ships to carry on their trade in