

19 June, 1911.]

BRITISH AND FOREIGN SHIPPING.

[11th Day.]

Sir JOSEPH WARD—*cont.*

competition with the others across the ocean to Australia from New Zealand and round our coasts, or else we have to admit (to which I should take the most decided objection) that in a country like New Zealand, which in the future will be a country owning many ships and manning them with white crews, to run them, we must stop the registration of our own ships in our own territory and by doing so admit that we cannot carry on in a British Dominion the great shipping industry to which we attach importance except by the levelling down of the conditions and pay to white crews under which it is carried on. Those conditions can only be levelled down by the transfer of the vessels to some other country outside New Zealand and outside Australia, so that the all-powerful protection of the British flag over the wide interests that it represents can be given to coloured crews (some of which come from an important British Possession) on board those vessels, at rates of pay, and under conditions of labour, ever so much inferior to those the white man should be asked to accept, and which my Government representing our white people in a British Dominion are determined, so far as they can, should not exist on those vessels locally owned and sailing under the British flag.

Let me say here that I want to keep absolutely away from the consideration of the manning of ships, the difference between the admission of Indians to our country, or the admission of coloured races from any portion of the British Empire to our country, and the existing position of those who are domiciled in any overseas Dominion, though they may have been there with their families from the time they originally went, in some cases up to 200 years, as Lord Crewe said. That question is the employment of sections of that community on board ships as employees who are not admitted to the rights of citizenship, and only come to our waters to enable ships to carry on their business over the sea, are as diametrically different in my opinion as daylight from dark. With regard to the question of the general admission of coloured races to our country, Lord Crewe, in the course of his speech, said we had the right to do as we think proper in connection with the admitting of those who are to be citizens of our Dominions. That is so. That question requires to be kept entirely apart from the other, because we are not raising it here. What I am raising by the resolution is the protection of the white crews on board the ships trading with the British flag flying at their mast under conditions which the laws of our country require them to observe. If the system that goes on now is to be continued, and the laws of our country continue as they are, it means the ruin of these vessels trading in our waters unless we repeal our present laws and allow the owners of ships trading in our waters to pay the white man on board those vessels any rate of pay which they think proper. This I am entirely opposed to, and I think it is our duty, in a country like New Zealand, to see that by legislation we impose fair conditions of work and fair rates of pay and fair hours of labour in connection with the manning and working of our shipping, both between our shores and Australia and round our coasts. I think certainly that it would be one of the most regrettable things which could happen if our shipping industry were left in this position, because it would tend to lessen the feeling of attachment and loyalty to the Empire which exists now amongst the white crews on board our vessels and in every other section of the community to which I have been referring. If a great British steamship company in England finds it necessary for its own purposes, in order to develop and carry on its business, to employ Indians on board its vessels, why should we be put in the position of reducing the conditions and pay of our men because an extremely low rate of pay is paid to our fellow subjects in India? It would be bringing the white men who compose the crews of our vessels to a position which is practically indefensible. For the preservation of that fine feeling which was referred to by Lord Crewe, in my judgment (if I may be permitted to express my individual view on the point) every Government in the Empire, the British Government, and the Governments of the overseas Dominions, should adopt the policy of urging upon the various portions of the world that every race should be relegated to its own zone. I am not going into that matter at length, but I had intended to speak upon that when dealing with questions of this kind, and I just want to say that I believe in the future the necessity for our having white people in the great and growing British Possessions will be