

19 June, 1911.]

BRITISH AND FOREIGN SHIPPING.

[11th Day.

Sir JOSEPH WARD—*cont.*

employed on these vessels—of whom there are many thousands in New Zealand and Australia—who have their homes and families ashore. I have had the matter brought before me officially in New Zealand by men pleading earnestly for protection, and they know it means, if it is allowed to continue, their absolute destruction unless they are to accept starvation wages, or, if the vessels are transferred to some other country outside New Zealand for registration, a portion of these men will be put out of employment, as they could not live for the same pay as lascars and support their wives and children.

I beg to move the Resolution.

Dr. FINDLAY : I should like to add a few words to what Sir Joseph Ward has said. May I suggest to Lord Crewe that he overlooks one important feature of this matter, and that is that it is not in any way a racial question at all. The same law would be made applicable if these crews consisted of a race which we admitted freely to our shores.

EARL OF CREWE : I think I pointed out that the labour question was apt to be confused with the racial question.

Dr. FINDLAY : That is so.

EARL OF CREWE : This is, of course, a branch of the labour question, and I quite agree it would apply equally to the Slavonic race or any other.

Dr. FINDLAY : To any race. If that is kept clearly in view, I want to emphasize another fact, that to-day in principle, and for years past, the same law has been in existence. We protect our labourers in New Zealand by imposing a tax, in some respects prohibitive, against importations from India into New Zealand. That is how we protect workers ashore. That is not racial; it is purely economic. We say if we admit the product of cheap Indian labour into our market our white workers cannot be paid a living wage. You will observe, therefore, that it is a purely economic question. Now, in what respect is that different from the case before us? We have white workers on our ships. It is contended that we should allow Indian workers upon other ships to come into our waters and be paid a rate lower than to-day we force by law our ship-owners to pay white workers. Surely if those ships are coming into the waters of New Zealand we are entitled to require that they shall submit to the laws of New Zealand. We cannot give extra-territorial operation to the law. We recognise that it can only have operation within the territorial waters of our country. Surely it is not, therefore, in any sense objectionable on racial grounds that we should attempt to impose upon employers of brown or dark labour on ships the same obligations as to wages that we impose upon other labour employers. I make that point because it seems to me in the long discussion that has taken place there is a disposition to overlook the fact that in these cases no question of colour comes in, and there need be no apprehension on the part of the Indian worker that this law is made specially applicable to him, because, as Lord Crewe recognises, it would be applicable to any other employees.

May I make this further point : We are not attempting to disturb an existing condition or business, but we are attempting to maintain the *status quo*. We have had up to the present time white labour on our ships plying between Australia and New Zealand. It has worked well, and the wages have been fair and reasonable, and they have afforded some measure of comfort to the seamen and his dependants ashore. There have come into our waters very recently ships bringing Indian sailors. We say, therefore, that we are entitled to maintain the existing state of things. We are not disturbing anything, and for that reason alone it can hardly be urged that there is anything offensive or—I forget the phrase that is used—grievous in this legislation against our Indian British subjects.