

11th Day.]

BRITISH AND FOREIGN SHIPPING.

[19 June, 1911.]

Dr. FINDLAY—*cont.*

I do not want to stress what has been said so fully by Sir Joseph Ward; but what you have to decide to-day is this: are 10,000 seamen and other workers in New Zealand to be thrown out of employment because a certain number of Indian crews are coming there? If they are to continue to come it is quite clear, as has been said, they will get the control of most, if not all, of the shipping on our side, and our 10,000 people and their wives and families will have to find different employment. It is a very serious question, and much more serious than it looks to gentlemen on this side of the world, and that accounts for the passage of the Bill which we are asking His Majesty to sanction.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: We are prepared on our part to support the Resolution of Sir Joseph Ward, although had I had the drafting of it I would not have expressed it in the same way. The Resolution reads as follows: "That the self-governing oversea Dominions have now reached a stage of development when they should be intrusted with wider legislative powers in respect to British and foreign shipping." My contention has always been, and is, that under our respective constitutions, at all events, the Constitution of Canada, our powers to legislate for shipping are plenary, and that any legislation we pass as to shipping is not only valid but enforceable in law. But the point of difficulty is that whilst, in my judgment, the powers conferred on the Dominion of Canada to legislate on shipping, and I presume the other Dominions also, are plenary and absolute, the British Government in granting the power of self-government to the Dominions has reserved to itself the power of disallowance, and when legislation is passed of preventing the sanction and putting in force of any such legislation which they think objectionable. While, as I say, the United Kingdom here has asserted to itself the power to disallow any legislation which it is in the power of the self-governing Dominions to pass, it has been very chary of exercising that power, except in matters of shipping, whereon it has always maintained the doctrine that it had the power to supervise the legislation passed by the self-governing Dominions. That is a question of policy more than a question of law, and I do not think that we require any more power than we have at the present time to pass an Act, and, after that Act is passed, it is valid absolutely.

Dr. FINDLAY: Are you keeping in mind the section of the Imperial Merchant Shipping Act limiting the power of the oversea Dominions?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I am. This power is granted to us in our Constitution, but whether it is a question of law or policy I sympathise with the object of the Resolution whether it is raised in one way or the other. I say I sympathise with that, because we in Canada intend to keep to our doctrine that our powers in shipping are plenary. But it so happens in this case the Legislature of New Zealand has passed a law which they think to be essential for the welfare of their country. The British Government have taken up the position that this is an interference with the powers that they have asserted to themselves. It is not because they think it is an infringement on their powers, but, as I think, because they believe also it is bad policy. I sympathise with the object of the Resolution whether you meet it in one way or the other, whether according to my own views or according to the views of Sir Joseph Ward and the New Zealand Government. The question is a very large one, and embraces the whole policy of shipping, but it is intended to reach only one point, that is to say, the employment of Asiatic labourers in the self-governing Dominions. Lord Crew, in the very interesting statement which he made to-day, has covered the whole ground, not only with regard to shipping, but with regard to everything in all the Dominions. It so happens that in New Zealand Asiatic labour is brought in to compete with white labour in shipping. Asiatic labour is brought to Canada chiefly to compete in such works as railways, sawmills, lumber camps, and fishing. Whether it is one kind of labour or another does not matter; the principle is the same. The question is one of very serious diffi-