

19 June, 1911.]

BRITISH AND FOREIGN SHIPPING.

[11th Day.

Sir JOSEPH WARD—*cont.*

maintain the unity of the Empire, and nothing, I am sure, would be done more readily in order to maintain that unity in the Empire to which Lord Crewe has referred. But that is not the question nor the point of the difficulty here. It is as certain as that I am addressing this Conference, that if the existing system goes on, one of the two alternatives I have suggested has to take place.

Now let me for one minute say that this is not a question of superiority from the standpoint of the white people to our fellow British subjects, the Indians, that is at issue. To my mind the question is that the white races and the coloured races, under the extraordinary differences in the rates of pay, under the extraordinary differences in the conditions imposed by the requirements of social life in different portions of the British Empire, the white man having in many cases to support a wife and children ashore, cannot under existing conditions work together. I am not at present going into the high social side, which I believe to be of importance to the Indians as well as to the white people, as to the preservation of our individual races. All recognise that not only the Indians but the Asiatics have a right to the fullest consideration upon the score of race and that their pride in their own race is probably as great as our pride in ours; that we have a right to respect that pride which they have in their race, and they in turn have a right to respect the pride we have in our race. But if this position of affairs which exists now is to continue, and I want to make it perfectly clear that we are glad to see any great British steamship line trading to our country, and we hail it with great pleasure their doing so on equal terms and conditions with our own ships; but the conditions under which they are trading between Australia and New Zealand, and on the Australian coast too, are, I repeat, a menace to the whole of the great shipping industry which is owned and controlled and worked in those countries, unless there is some *modus vivendi* arrived at to prevent practically the destruction of the interests of the white crews on board those vessels. For my part I want to make it perfectly clear—I feel that it is due to the people in my country—that while I am as anxious as any man round this table to preserve all that would make for the consolidation and unity of the British Empire, I feel it absolutely necessary in the interests of the people of my country to ask the British Government to do all in their power—and I certainly intend, on behalf of the New Zealand Government with my colleagues, to do all in my power—to prevent what really means the wiping out of the white crews, on the one hand, of the vessels owned in New Zealand unless their rates of pay are lowered to an amount that could not support their wives and children ashore, or, upon the other hand, the necessity for the same rate of pay being paid to the Indians on board ships not only trading to New Zealand but everywhere else in order to prevent undue competition with the white crews, and I think that is defensible both from the Indian standpoint and from the British standpoint.

I listened to Lord Crewe's statement concerning the position in India with a very great deal of interest, and when he asked that the Ministers of the self-governing Dominions should spread within their own areas the views he was putting forth regarding India, I thought there was a great deal to be said for that, with this important reservation: the importance of not doing anything to help those who have their hand against the powers that be, in trying to weaken the position of the Indian Empire. But while in our country anxious and willing to do what is suggested in that respect to the utmost of our ability, if it is a *sine qua non* that there should be the employment of a section of the British races at rates of wages and rates of pay so low, by comparison with what a white man must have to enable him to live, as would not enable him to conform to his social and domestic requirements—if we are asked to do that, then, I think, that means the destruction to a very large extent of very large sections of white British people in some of the oversea countries, and that would be simply intolerable.

The Bill which the New Zealand Government passed through Parliament last session, and which is held over at the present moment—I knew it would be held over for the Royal Assent, because it does introduce very important provisions in connection with a matter which affects very large questions both in India and elsewhere—is really the cause of the submitting of the memorandum from which Lord Crewe has quoted this morning relative to the British Indians in the