

Mr. BUXTON—*cont.*

Kingdom on a voyage which might carry her to one of these Dominions would therefore have either beforehand to comply with the varying conditions imposed in territorial waters, or would have to undergo structural alterations on her arrival in the Dominion port, which would lead to great expense and delay. These additional requirements would, it must be remembered, apply to ships which had already fully complied with all the requirements of the Imperial Acts before leaving this country, and, after all, the experience of mercantile marine matters in this country is very exhaustive. It is clear that if one Dominion or Colony is entitled to enforce its own mercantile regulations, each and all must be given the same freedom. Would not chaos then ensue if and when each Dominion or each Colony enforced its particular and varying legislation as regards manning, crew space, load-line, &c.?

We must not confine our attention to liners, the class of vessels usually discussed in this connection, but must consider also the case of the ordinary commercial steamers, which represent the largest part of British and foreign commerce. Take the case of a tramp steamship owned and registered in the United Kingdom which is chartered now for a voyage to Australia or New Zealand, now to South Africa, now to Canada, according to the state of the freight market. The owner often does not know at what port the ship will touch when the voyage is begun. At present he knows exactly the conditions with which his ship has to comply, and unless the ship is to engage in the colonial coasting trade, he knows he has no other conditions to comply with than those laid down in the Imperial Act. But suppose each Dominion could lay hold of that vessel and subject her in its ports to an entirely fresh code of regulations—alter, say, the requirements of crew space, manning, wages and food scale. Suppose, further (which is quite probable), that the Australian, New Zealand, South African, Canadian, and Newfoundland laws vary on all these different points. How can the ordinary system of shipping be carried on under such conditions? Will not the trade be enormously hampered?

Then the question must also be considered from the point of view of foreign shipping and British competition with it. The Dominion conditions cannot be so adequately or effectively enforced on foreign shipping as they can on British. For example, there would be no effective means of ensuring, as might be the case with a British ship, that a foreign ship complied with the conditions once she had left the territorial waters of the Dominion. In the case of wages there would be nothing to prevent a foreign ship complying with the requirements while in New Zealand, and then reducing the wages to their original amount after leaving New Zealand waters, and even deducting the excess paid there. This they would do without leaving any trace; while in the case of a British ship, owing to the fact that seamen have to be paid off before a British officer and accounts rendered to seamen, such evasions could not be so effectively concealed.

Foreign ships, too, on leaving the territorial waters, could reconvert the additional crew space to cargo space, and they could get rid of the additional men whom they might be forced to carry at their next port of call after leaving the Dominion. Thus to give the powers sought would discriminate to the disadvantage of British ships. That this is not the desire of the Dominions may perhaps be inferred from that part of the Resolution proposed by the Commonwealth Government, and agreed to by the Conference, which refers to the securing to British ships equal trading advantages with foreign ships.

No foreign country attempts to enforce her own rates of wages or manning scales or crew space, &c., on the vessels of another country trading to her ports from abroad; nor does the Imperial Government interfere with the arrangements on board of a foreign ship while in a port of the United Kingdom except in matters relating directly to safety, such as cases of overloading, and insufficient life-saving appliances, &c.

Those who live in the stress of international competition are convinced that it is not possible effectively to impose on foreign ships regulations affecting their domestic economy. The Dominions appear to think that they can impose these conditions on foreign ships as well as British. What will be the effect of their action? If they attempt and fail—a preference will be given to foreign shipping. If they attempt and succeed—retaliation will ensue. The Germans, for