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1901-10-04

Senate.

The President took the chair at 10.30 a.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS

SUGGESTIONS AS TO DUTIES

Senator PULSFORD

- Referring to Senator O'Connor's statement of 31st May, that suggestions relative to the rates of duties which it was sought to have fixed, had been received from various associations and that there would be no objection to lay them upon the table of the Senate as soon as the Tariff resolutions had been tabled in the other House, will he see that they are laid on the table upon Wednesday next?

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Vice-President of the Executive Council

Senator O'CONNOR

- I ask the honor able senator to give notice of the question.

The PRESIDENT

- Papers can only be laid upon the table pursuant to statute, by order of the Senate, by command of His Excellency the Governor-General, or by the President. Therefore, it is not competent for the Vice-President of the Executive Council, on his own motion, to lay any paper upon the table. Of course he can do it by command.

PUBLIC SERVICE BILL.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

- Col. NEILD asked the Vice-President of the Executive Council, upon notice -

Was not the Public Service Bill read a first time in this Senate on the 17th July, or over eleven weeks ago ?

On how many occasions has the said Bill been brought before this Senate during all this period ?

How many hours has the Government devoted to the discussion of this measure in this Senate ?

Is it the intention of the Government to make any effort to deal with the Public Service Bill, or is it intended to bring forward the said Bill, when, and so often as, the Government has no other business ready to bring before this Senate ?

Is the Minister aware that several senators have, at great personal sacrifice, attended week after week, in the expectation of the Public Service Bill being dealt with, merely to meet with long-continued disappointment ?

Does the Minister consider that this unsatisfactory and fragmentary method of conducting important measures through this Senate is conducive to the speedy and efficient conduct of public business?

Senator O'CONNOR

- As these questions appear to have been framed more with the view of conveying offensive comment than of seeking information, I decline to answer them.

VICTORIAN MILITARY FORCES.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

asked the Vice-President of the Executive Council, upon notice -

Has the report of Major-General Downes upon the Victorian Military Forces during the year 1000-1 been presented to the Federal or to the State Minister for Defence ?

Is the Victorian Field Artillery still armed with the " worse than useless" guns described in the said report ?

Are the horses now in use by the Victorian Field Artillery those described in the said report as " thoroughly unsuited " for the work required of them ?

Are steps being taken to efficiently arm and horse the said Artillery ?

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Senator O'CONNOR

- The answers are as follow : -

To the Minister of State for the Commonwealth.

Yes ; but action has been taken to remedy the matter.

A report from the Commandant on this subject has been asked for.

Yes.

#### PAPERS

Senator DRAKE laid upon the table

A return with regard to Customs statistics as to imports of sugar, tea, spirits, tobacco, kerosene, &c.

A return to an order of the Senate for copies of all correspondence and documents relating to and inquiry connected with the holding of a military camp at Hobart.

Ordered to be printed.

#### KANAKA AND COLOURED LABOUR.

Ordered (on motion by Senator Walker) -

That there be laid on the table of the Senate copies of all correspondence that has taken place between the Government of Queensland and the Commonwealth Government respecting the kanaka and coloured labour question.

#### BEER EXCISE BILL.

In Committee (consideration of amendments of House of Representatives) :

Clause 46 (Access to brewery and books).

Senator O'CONNOR (New South Wales Vice President of the Executive Council). - An amendment was made by the Senate in clause 46 in order to make it certain that secrets of manufacture should not be unnecessarily pried into. There seemed to be very good reason for moving the amendment, and, at the suggestion of Senator Walker, I moved a similar amendment in the Excise Bill. As I do not see any necessity for altering that opinion, I move -

That the committee insists on its amendment in clause 46, omitting the words "and the making of beer."

Motion agreed to.

Resolution reported and adopted.

#### DISTILLATION BILL.

In Committee (consideration of amendments of House of Representatives) :

Clause 58 (Maximum strength of wine).

Senator O'CONNOR (New South Wales - Vice-President of the Executive Council). - It will be remembered that clauses 57 and 58, involving the question of the fortifying of wines, particularly of Australian wines, were very much discussed. There was a discussion in regard to clause 57, as a result of which a certain amendment was carried on the motion of Senator McGregor, and a consequential amendment was moved in clause 5.8 to add words to make it quite clear what the meaning of pure white spirit was. Inasmuch as our amendment in clause 57 has been allowed to stand, it seems to me that the consequential amendment must stand also. Therefore, I move -

That the committee insist on its amendment in clause 58, inserting the words "of a strength of at least 30 degrees above proof."

Motion agreed to.

#### THIRD SCHEDULE

Every case must have branded or painted thereon the name of the distiller or the name of the distillery, and the place where the spirits were distilled, and any number or letter which the collector shall direct ; and, if so prescribed, the materials of which the spirits have been made.....

Senator O'CONNOR

- All the words, after the word "direct," in regulation 59, were struck out by the Senate after a considerable debate, on the ground that they would put the Australian distiller in an unfair position in regard to any other distiller, and at there was really no reason for their insertion. I do not see that there is any reason now why that view should be altered, therefore I move -

That the committee insist on its amendment omitting from regulation No. 59 all the words after the word "direct."

Motion agreed to.

Senator CLEMONS

- I should like to ask the Vice President of the Executive Council if this amendment was the one which was suggested by the Government in another place ? If so - I shall be delighted to hear an affirmative answer - I am glad we are going to defy, not merely the other House, but a suggestion originated in that House by members of the Government. I think that is what we are doing.

Senator O'Connor

- I do not know that it is necessary for me to answer the question.

Motion agreed to. ....60. No label shall be affixed by a distiller to any bottles containing spirits, unless the collector has given his permission in writing to the affixing of such labels, and, if so prescribed, each label shall state the materials of which the contents are made.

Senator O'CONNOR

- I move-

That the committee insist upon the amendment in regulation 60, omitting all the words after the word "labels."

This is an amendment of precisely the same kind as the preceding one.

Motion agreed to.

Resolutions reported, and adopted.

POST AND TELEGRAPH BILL

In Committee(consideration of amendments of House of Representatives resumed, from October 3, vide page 5565) :

New clause 15a -

1 ) No contract or arrangement for the carriage of mails shall be entered into on behalf of the Commonwealth unless it contains a condition that only white labour shall be employed in such carriage. This condition shall not apply to the coaling and loading of ships at places beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

Motion (by Senator O'Connor) again proposed -

That the committee agree to the amendment of the House of Representatives inserting new clause.

Upon which Senator Neild had moved, by way of amendment -

That, after the word " apply," line 6, the following words be inserted : - " To agreements limited to single voyages nor."

Senator CLEMONS

- I listened with a great deal of interest to the long and heated debate which took place last night upon this proposed new clause.

Senator Drake

-There was no heat.

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Senator CLEMONS

- I recognise that there was a considerable amount of heat in the debate. At the beginning of my remarks I prefer to go back to the commencement of the debate last night. The committee will probably remember that the discussion on the clause was initiated by the Postmaster-General. We are discussing an amendment which the committee negatived by a very large majority when the Bill was first considered. Prima facie therefore we, as a committee, have to determine to what extent we can stultify our original decision, or whether we shall adhere to what we formerly decided by a large majority. The Postmaster-General began the debate with some remarks with which I was very much amused. He is, so to speak, the parliamentary author of this Bill, and he is certainly the custodian of it in the Senate. What is his attitude with regard to this very important amendment ? He seemed to me to start with a mild and gentle regretting of the fact that the usefulness of the Australian aborigine might be seriously impaired if we accepted the proposed new clause. That was his first argument, and in a quasi-defiant way he went on to inform the committee that although apparently, under the wording of this clause, he would not be able to use the aborigine as he wanted, he nevertheless intended to defeat the clause by making use of him. The Postmaster-General's further attitude, so far as he betrayed his feelings in regard to the clause, was to instruct the committee that the amendment which has been suggested by the House of Representatives could be entirely set at nought by the force of other clauses in the Bill.

Senator Drake

- No, not entirely set at nought.

Senator CLEMONS

- The Postmaster-General referred gratuitously to clauses 14 and 67. He certainly said that clause 14 would be of considerable assistance to him in avoiding the difficulty he would be placed in if he had to

administer this new clause literally, and he also reminded the committee that under clause 67 he was still enabled to make any arrangement that he chose with regard to the conveyance of mails from any port of the Commonwealth to any other part of the world.

Senator Drake

- Not arrangement.

Senator CLEMONS

- We all know that the companies which are largely interested in this clause are the P. and O. and Orient Companies; and the Postmaster-General gratuitously informed the committee that he would be able, in spite of it, to employ both these companies as fully as he chose under the operation of clause 67.

Senator Drake

- By force of law, yes.

Senator Dobson

- But at greater expense.

Senator CLEMONS

- Of course, it is not supposed that the Postmaster-General is going to bother about expense. We are going to enforce the principle of a white Australia, and in doing so the Postmaster-General and the rest of us are to disregard entirely the question of expense.

Senator Drake

- I do not know that it would cost greater expense, but we should have no control over the steamers in the matter of speed.

Senator CLEMONS

- The clause will be enforced at the expense of the regularity of the service.

Senator Drake

- There would be less regularity - that is right.

Senator CLEMONS

- The Postmaster-General would be able to call upon the P. and O. and Orient boats to carry our mails, but he would not be able to enter into any contract with them to deliver the mails within any specified time.

Senator Drake

- That is right.

Senator CLEMONS

- While the Postmaster-General says that probably the Commonwealth would not be put to greater expense, he admits that there will be trouble in the matter of mail deliveries.

Senator Drake

- I do not admit that, even.

Senator Glassey

- Why should there be?

Senator Drake

- The companies have other reasons for running their ships regularly; they are competing with one another.

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Senator CLEMONS

- But one of the chief inducements the Commonwealth recognises in entering into contracts with the P. and O. and Orient Companies is the regularity of the mail service. That is one of the demands that the public has a right to make. Of course, if the Government enters into no contract, the regularity of the service will suffer, and the public will to that extent be inconvenienced. Of that there is no question. Another attitude that has entertained me very much is that of the Vice-President of the Executive Council. I do not suppose there is any honorable senator who remembers the original discussion upon this question, who does not agree with me that the Vice President of the Executive Council was equally emphatic and forceful in two directions. He was overflowing with sympathy with the demand for a white Australia. At the same time he was never more emphatic in this chamber than in his declaration that the provision now proposed to be inserted in the Bill was impossible and impracticable. Of that there can be no doubt. These are the words in which the Vice-President of the Executive Council dealt with the question -

Therefore, dealing with the question in a practical way, I say that it is impossible to apply this principle. He then considered it impossible to apply the principle. It may be said that this impossibility has vanished on closer investigation, but, so far as we can understand, that is not so. I listened with the very utmost care to the words of the Vice-President of the Executive Council yesterday, and I saw, as we all did, that he entirely left alone the question of practicability. All that he did yesterday was to reiterate his sympathy with the demand for a white Australia, but not by one single word did he attempt to change from his former position as to the impracticability of enforcing the principle. That is his attitude at the present time. All the excuse he could make was one with which I can heartily sympathize. He said that as a member of the Cabinet he had to compromise. I sympathize with the honorable and learned senator in having to recognise his duty to the Cabinet ; but I say distinctly that I prefer the remarks of Senator O'Connor to the remarks of the Vice-President of the Executive Council, and that I recognise that Senator O'Connor is still of the opinion that the clause proposed to be inserted is one that it will be absolutely impossible to carry out. That was Senator O'Connor's opinion a fortnight ago, and it is his opinion this morning. The Vice-President of the Executive Council is not applying, with regard to the employment of black labour on boats, the educational test that is to be applied to those black people whom it is desired to exclude from the country. I hope honorable senators who support the amendment will be equally satisfied with the attitude of the Government when we come to deal with the presence of black men on shore. I hope they will then find Senator O'Connor's attitude as satisfactory as they do now.

The CHAIRMAN

- Order.

Senator CLEMONS

- I hope you will not, under the circumstances, call me to order, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN

- The honorable senator is referring to another Bill altogether.

Senator CLEMONS

- But it is closely involved in the consideration of this question. If I am trespassing in this matter I am not the first who has trespassed, but I shall apparently be the first to be stopped. If we take away from some honorable senators their cry on the question of a white Australia, practically we take away from them their support, because it is on that cry that they rely. Therefore, I remind those who rely upon the cry for a white Australia that they are treating this matter in a way that they do not desire to see the other question treated. I point out that the blemishes and blots that appear in connexion with the policy of a white Australia as represented on board ship, are blots which are treated in a very different way from the blemishes that are to be removed from Australia on shore.

Senator PEARCE

- Not so far as we are concerned.

Senator CLEMONS

- I hope Senator Pearce will be satisfied with the treatment he is to get in that matter. From those who have made themselves most conspicuous in their advocacy of this amendment I have heard no arguments with the exception of the remarks from Senator Pearce, which seem to me to be worth answering. I should like to compliment Senator Pearce on the way in which he has approached this subject. He alone, of all the honorable senators who have urged; reasons why we should adopt this amendment, has adduced arguments which are worth answering. I would also say that in my humble opinion his remarks lost none of their effectiveness because they were characterized by no approach to violence.. The honorable senator's chief argument, is that by excluding black labour from ships, that carry mails we shall be doing something to improve the position of our mercantile marine. If we in Australia were in possession either of a navy or of a very large mercantile fleet I might be disposed to admit that there is a good deal in his argument, but I would remind him that in this matter he is attempting to legislate, not for Australia, but for Great Britain. I deprecate any interference, even on the part of this magnificent Commonwealth Parliament, with the management of the naval affairs of Great Britain. Great Britain can manage her own naval affairs, and it is quite unnecessary for us to interfere, however sincere our motives and however worthy our efforts in the interests of the British Navy may be.

Senator Higgs

- That is very far-fetched.

Senator CLEMONS

- I do not think it is, because I do not recognise that we have any mercantile marine to assist in this way. I remember, of course, that our most magnificent contribution to the British Navy- - for the squadron which constitutes our chief means of defence - represents about £105,000 per annum. I suppose it is intended to add to that exuberant generosity by this attempt to see that every sailor on board our mail ships is a white man. That argument has no effect upon me. There is another statement of the question to which I object. I have heard both from honorable senators who support the amendment, and from those who oppose it, more or less fervent appeals to patriotism. This question is not amenable to patriotic treatment, and I might say further at this point that I do not think the difficulty will be made soluble by attempting to immerse it in poetry. Such an attempt was made last night. With regard to the cry for a " White Australia," let me say that, in my opinion, there is abundant justification for it. A proper desire for the preservation of the white races in Australia is the justification for the cry ; but when the demand is extended to vessels that may carry our mails, what are honorable senators doing! Those who wish to extend it in that direction are determined to persecute the black races. There is an enormous difference between the justifiable demand for preserving the white races on our shores and the persecution of black races at sea. That is, undoubtedly, what honorable senators who favour this amendment are supporting, and that is why it has no sympathy from me. I cannot see that the supporters of the amendment are in any way within their proper demand for a white Australia in attempting to exclude black men from mail ships. To my mind, it amounts to nothing more nor less than the persecution of the black people.

Senator Higgs

- The persecution exists on the boats at the present time ; they are persecuted by the shipping companies.

Senator CLEMONS

- These black men are not slaves. They go on the boats by their own free will. There is no compulsion in the matter. To say that they are persecuted on these boats is simply idle.

Senator Dobson

- It is contrary to fact.

Senator Higgs

- What did Senator Dobson show in his quotation last night ?

Senator CLEMONS

- The demand for a white Australia to preserve the purity of our race is well justified. But there is an industrial side to this question which honorable senators in the labour corner recognise. Is there a single senator, however fervent his desire may be to improve the industrial conditions of Australia, who believes that by carrying this amendment we shall improve the condition of a single Australian workman ?

Senator Higgs

- We believe that will be the result.

Senator CLEMONS

- What is going to happen if black men are excluded from our mail steamers ? Do honorable senators think that a single white Australian will sign on in their places ? Such a man will not be able to do so, because the crews are all shipped in England, and no opportunity will be given for the shipping of white instead of black men in any Australian port. If the opportunity were given, however, would it be availed of ? I do not think for one moment that there are any white men in Australia who would jump at the chance of working in the stoke-holes of vessels which pass through the tropics and the Red Sea. Even if the amendment is passed, those who support it will secure nothing. That is one of the chief reasons why I cannot vote for it. I can see no likelihood of any practical result from it, save, as I have said before, the persecution of coloured men, which is unworthy of those whose chief cry is for the preservation of the purity of their own race. There is yet another aspect to be dealt with. A good many honorable senators have obviously changed their opinions. After due consideration, I say that every honorable senator who is prepared to-day to vote for the absolute and direct exclusion of black men from mail steam-ships is bound to vote for the absolute and direct exclusion of black men from Australian shores. I shall be most interested in hearing the debate which will take place in the Senate at an early date, and in seeing how the votes of those honorable senators who propose to vote for this amendment will be given.

Senator Staniforth Smith

- The honorable and learned senator will find that they will come out all right.

Senator CLEMONS

- There is no contradicting the fact that those who are going to exclude black men from mail steamships must vote for their exclusion from our shores. Why should they not do so ? Are they going to be afraid of

Downingstreet 1

Senator Barrett

- No.

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Senator CLEMONS

- That is the argument always used. Do honorable senators think that Downing-street will not be affronted or annoyed if we exclude black labour from mail steamers 1 If we compel' the British Government to enter into another form of contract, will not that be an affront to the Imperial authorities 1 The Home Government desire, of course, to secure the conveyance of mails from England to Australia just as we wish to secure their conveyance from Australia to England. They have made their own contract in this matter, and it has been in existence for many years. If this Bill receives the Royal assent the inevitable result will be that the terms of the contract must be altered, and the expenses increased. That is not the sort of thing which is calculated to meet with the approval of the Home authorities. What do we say here ? The Government are quite prepared to ignore any demand the Home authorities make in this matter. They have no compunction whatever in telling them that in framing this contract chief consideration will have to be shown to the Australian side of it. I am simply making these remarks in order to show that there is no deferring to Downing-street ; and I wish to show every honorable senator who supports this amendment that when we come to vote on a kindred subject he will not be able to say that he objects to the direct method in this matter, because he does not wish to affront the Imperial authorities.

Senator O'Keefe

- If the honorable and learned senator believes in the direct method in one case why should he not support it in this?

Senator CLEMONS

- If I did believe in the direct method in the other case that would be a strong reason why I should not apply it in this instance. I think that this is indistinctly unworthy of the cry for a white Australia.

Senator Higgs

- The British public will compel the Home Government to do the same thing before long.

Senator CLEMONS

- I am dealing now with honorable senators who are going to support the Government on this division, although it is a direct method of excluding black labour, and although it is in direct antagonism to the desires of Downing Street. If they have any regard for consistency, they must be equally determined when they record their votes on another question ; they will not be able to fall behind the shadow of an educational test.

Senator Staniforth Smith

- We shall not be afraid.

Senator CLEMONS

- That is what I want to impress upon every honorable senator who is going to be this morning a blind follower of the Government. I hope he will not always limit his vote by a regard for the desires of the Government ; but I think that in this case the desires of the Government will have a good deal to do with the votes of more than one honorable senator. I am free to express my own opinion, and if the Government turn round completely, and swallow their own words, I am not going to vote with them. I do not intend to delay much longer on this subject, because I know perfectly well that honorable senators have made up their minds.

Senator Staniforth Smith

- Why speak to the question then 1

Senator CLEMONS

- Because I think it is an occasion upon which every honorable senator should express his view. I want to make my attitude on the question clear, because I am distinctly opposed to the amendment. My

honorable friends in the labour corner have come into this Chamber with strict orders - I do not use the term offensively - and they are determined, and willingly determined, to enforce the conditions of a white Australia. They have orders, and are not ashamed of having received those orders.

Senator Pearce

- Some honorable senators have received the same orders, but are going to disobey them.

Senator CLEMONS

- Precisely. I can see already obvious traces of that kind of arrogance which comes from a successful division, and which they are going to have presently. I want to ask those honorable senators who are so keen on the subject of a white Australia whether they expect to be very jubilant when we shall have finally thrashed out this question ?

Senator Higgs

- What is the honorable and learned senator hinting at ?

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Senator CLEMONS

- What I want to know is whether those honorable senators imagine they are going to celebrate a glorious victory at the close of the first session of Parliament, and that they will be able to go back to their constituents and say - "We have not been able to make Australia quite snow white, but there is not a single black speck on any boat that carries our mails"? That is the position in which they will find themselves."

Senator Pearce

- It depends upon the i freetrade members.

Senator CLEMONS

- It does not. It depends upon the Government. My opinion is that the Government are going to enable those honorable senators who advocate a "White Australia" to celebrate a glorious victory in this way. In fact, it -seems to me that those senators have come here in order to get the Government to manufacture a big kite with " White Australia" painted all over it, but when they come to fly their kite before their admiring constituents, they will find that they have not got the kite but have only got the tail - the right to keep black men off these "boats. We know that by the educational test black men will be allowed freely to come into the Commonwealth, and as a matter of fact, the result of this amendment "will be that, while we shall prevent these black men serving on the mail boats, they will be enabled to pass their examination of 50 words in English, and then to promptly take up their residence on our shores. That is what is going to be secured by keeping them out of the boats. They will be turned on to our shores and then these honorable senators can go with pride before their constituents and say to them, " See what we have done in the interests of a ' white Australia.' "

Senator O'Connor

- This is a party move that is a little too previous.

Senator DE LARGIE

- I do not intend to give a silent vote upon such an important amendment as that now before the committee. The reason is that, as Senator Clemons has put it, I have received instructions, or direct orders, and I intend to carry them out. I may say that the instructions or orders are from Australia. I do not presume to speak on behalf of Indian or lascar crews on the boats carrying mails to Australia. I do not presume to speak even on behalf of Downing-street, or of the British Empire. I presume only to speak on behalf of the working men of the ports of Fremantle, Geraldton, and Albany, in Western Australia, who feel very strongly on this matter, and who have a much greater interest in it than some honorable senators seem to think. Senator Clemons has said that even if coloured crews are done away with on these steamers, he does not think that any Australian white man will be found to take the place of these men. Perhaps there may not be a great number but I can assure the honorable and learned senator that .at the present time there is a considerable portion of our population getting a living by working in the stoke-holes, and there is a much larger proportion getting a living by working at a very much hotter occupation than work in the stoke-hole of a vessel. We do not need to go very far to find that out. We do not need to go away from the State in which we are at the present time. If we go to the deep mines of Bendigo we will find men working there in a greater degree of heat than is to be found in the stoke-hole of a steamer.



Senator Barrett

- Almost naked, too.

Senator DE LARGIE

- Naked they are. I know that in some of the deeper levels of these mines men have to work in a completely nude state. More than that, some of them have to work with jets of water turned upon them, and some have even to rub themselves with anti-friction grease before they start their work. This may be news to some honorable senators, and it is apparently amusing to Senator Clemons, but I can assure the honorable and learned senator that it is true, and it is very painful for those who have to do the work.

Senator Pearce

- Yet white men can be got to do it.

Senator DE LARGIE

- Yes, we can get white men to do it. There has been a great deal of talk about the excessive heat of the stoke-holes of steamers going through the Red Sea. Now I know a little about this. I am rather an old hand at this sort of thing, and have done a little work at it myself. I have not been in a stoke-hole while in the Red Sea, but I have gone through the Red Sea. We must remember that in a passage of about 30 days there are only three or four days passed in the Red Sea, and even the Red Sea is not so intolerably hot, except at certain seasons of the year. I therefore take it that this cry about the heat of the Red Sea has been made too much of.

Senator McGregor

- It is a red herring.

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Senator DE LARGIE

- Yes ; and it has been made a boggy of. I do not believe in it, and it is not founded on hard fact. I know that white men can work in places as hot as the Red Sea. I have seen them do so, and have done it myself. I am not by any means a physical giant, but I should not hesitate at any time to go to work alongside the best of the black stokers in any of these boats, and there are many white men far superior physically to me. I could take honorable senators to mines in this State where white men are doing work which no coolie or Lascar in the whole of the great Indian Empire could do. With these things before us, I hold that all this talk about the difficulties of work in the stokeholes in the Red Sea is only so much nonsense. I was very sorry to hear Senators Symon and Neild refer in the way they did to foreigners who, unfortunately in some respects, are taking the place of some of our own countrymen on board our steamers. I think it is better to see Europeans in these positions than lascars, for in many instances they become Australians, and good Australians, later on. We have heard Senator Symon and other senators saying that they would rather have black men on board these steamers than these foreigners. That is just the talk which places England in the position in which she is, of having no ally amongst the powers of Europe. I strongly oppose such sentiments. They are wrong, because they do injustice to a very large number of Europeans who have settled in Australia. Very many of these men, who have followed a seafaring life for years, have settled in Australia, and there are no better Australian citizens than some of them are. I therefore hope to hear no more about black men being preferable to foreigners in that respect. As to the arrogance referred to by Senator demons, I do not think there is any arrogance on the part of the labour corner because they are going to secure a victory on this occasion, for, even should we fail at this time to carry out our wishes, it would not be the last time the question would be heard of. It will be brought on again and again in this Senate, until it is carried, if it is not carried now. I think I can gauge public opinion sufficiently to say that we are on the right track, and have the flowing tide of public opinion with us. If the question is defeated on this occasion, it will be carried later on by this or by some other Government. There is therefore no arrogance on our part in pressing the matter forward this morning.

Senator McGregor

- It will be carried by the British Government.

Senator DE LARGIE

- We certainly see indications in that direction, but if it is defeated at the present time, it will be brought on again and again, until it is successful in this Senate.

Senator KEATING

- I shall not detain the committee much longer upon this question, because I feel that, no matter how long

we may discuss it, very little can now be added to what has already been said on both sides during the discussion. But I feel it is due to myself to indicate my position in the matter, inas much as when the question came up for the consideration of the Senate before I was not present, and have not had an opportunity of giving my views upon it. On this occasion also I shall not have an opportunity of voting directly, inasmuch as, for his convenience, I have paired with an honorable senator whose business has called him away. I wish to say that my attitude now is the attitude I should have maintained had I been present on the previous occasion, and I am distinctly in favour of the amendment which has been carried in the House of Representatives. I think the question before us is not, as suggested by Senator Symon, a question of the power we have to legislate upon this matter - the power to legislate indirectly with regard to the territory of other people, regarding the ships of other people as a part of their territory. As to the power we have to legislate in this direction, there can be no doubt in the minds of any honorable senator. The whole question is as to the expediency involved in such legislation. Having regard to the fact that we have trading to Australia, not merely to one port, but to one port and thence round the whole coast of Australia, foreign-going vessels, and that so far as the coastal navigation of Australia is concerned they are in direct competition with the people of our own States - companies existing in our own States - we should, so far as possible, legislate to preserve in the competition around our coast, at least, equality of conditions. For that reason I am moved to support an amendment of this character. It would seem from the remarks of honorable senators who have opposed the amendment that it is an entirely novel departure, and something absolutely monstrous on the part of the Federal Legislature to attempt to legislate in this way, and yet we have the fact that for some years past the State of Queensland has had in operation a similar enactment.

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Senator Glassey

- Since 1889.

Senator KEATING

- An enactment which arose out of the disaster in connexion with the Quetta.

Senator Glassey

- No ; it was prior to that.

Senator KEATING

- I understood that the disaster that occurred in connexion with the Quetta forced the members of the Queensland Parliament to take into consideration the question of the undesirableness of subsidizing steam-ships employing this class of labour.

Senator Glassey

- No; the Queensland Parliament adopted this principle, by resolution, before that disaster took place.

Senator KEATING

- When the disaster to the Quetta occurred I know it confirmed the members of the Queensland Legislature in the idea that it was absolutely necessary that the State of Queensland should not subsidize any steam-ships for the carriage of mails that employed labour of such a character. We have further the fact that the Imperial Parliament has actually appointed a commission that has been taking evidence and making inquiries into the whole question as to whether it should any longer be a party to any contract or arrangement which will involve a subsidy to steam-ship companies which employ labour of this character. Senator Neild has told us of his experience in visiting one of the American war-ships lying in the harbor here. The honorable senator has told us the explanation given to him of the ingenious way in which they got over the difficulty they were in in having on board their vessels Chinese or other foreigners who are not supposed to come into American territory. He has told us that they left their Chinese at their last port of call when proceeding to American waters. We have been told, and I do not know how practicable it is, that if an amendment of the kind suggested by the House of Representatives is inserted in the Postal Act of the Commonwealth the P. and O. and Orient, and such other companies as may be subsidized by the Commonwealth for the carriage of mails, will avoid the difficulty in the way suggested to honorable senators by the incident to which Senator Neild refers. In other words that as soon as they get to their first port of call outside of Australian waters they will utilize lascars or other coloured labour, and before leaving their last port of departure to come to Australian waters they will exchange them for a white crew. If they choose to do that, and to run round our coast employing only white labour, they will be complying

at least with the letter of this enactment. I very much regret that Senator Dobson and one or two other honorable senators have, in discussing this matter, referred to men who have been employed in the past, men of our own blood and our own race, as inferior, not merely in physical capacity, but inferior in morals also, to the lascar. Senator Dobson has told us that employment of this character absolutely demoralizes white men ; that white stokers are given up to drunkenness, and constant desertion of duty; and he asks us to consider the picture of a boat finding it extremely difficult to get away to time because of desertions by such men. It must be remembered that Senator Dobson and others who speak in that way are quite accustomed, in parading their loyalty, to refer to these self-same men as the men who are doing the work of the Empire in South Africa, who have done the difficult and arduous work of the Empire wherever it has had to be done.

Senator Barrett

- They say then that they are the bone and sinew.

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Senator KEATING

- Yes -

It's thin red line of heroes, when the guns begin to shoot.

But when it is a question of cheapness, Tommy can be regarded as a drunken, unreliable brute. AV'e have heard a lot of talk as to the incapacity of white men to do this work - that it is work which no Australian, Britisher, or white man can do, and that you must employ men of greater physical capacity. Senator De Largie has pointed out that in Victoria in some of the deeper mines white men are employed on work imposing just as heavy a strain on their physical capacity as would the work in the stoke-hole. He need not have gone to this State for an illustration. In Tasmania, in some of our deeper mines, men are working in the lower levels with the smallest possible amount of clothing' upon them, and they have to be treated as miners have to be treated in the deeper levels in this State. Senator O'Keefe can bear me out when I say that not merely below the surface, but on the surface, in Tasmania, one can see not dozens, but hundreds, of men doing work imposing a far greater strain on their physical capacity than would the work in the stoke-holes of vessels passing through the Red Sea - I refer to the work which is done day after day by hundreds of stokers and others at the furnaces and smelters at Mount Lyell. Those men have to work in a temperature which is not exceeded by that of the stoke-holes in the Red Sea, and in an atmosphere charged with the fumes of sulphur and other noxious gases to which the stoker in the Red Sea is not subjected.

Senator De Largie

- They are doing the same thing in the gold mines in the West.

Senator KEATING

- They are doing the same thing in many places. The whole position has been given away by Senator Symon. I think he put it very clearly that it is really a question of cheapness.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- I distinctly deny that I put it as a question of cheapness. I never said so.

Senator KEATING

- The honorable and learned senator in his concluding remarks likened the agitation for a white Australia, extended to the mail ships, to the agitation which he said existed against the introduction of machinery, and he asked very forcibly whether, if he could get a machine to do the work " more cheaply " than a man, he should not be allowed to use it.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- I did not use the word " cheaper " at all, and never employed the argument in that way.

Senator KEATING

- The honorable and learned senator has probably seen the Mansard report of his . speech, and I think he will find--

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- I think, sir, the honorable and learned senator is bound to accept what I say. I have not seen the Mansard proof. I distinctly deny that I used the argument in the way in which he put it, or referred to the question as one of cheapness.

The CHAIRMAN

- Senator Keating is obliged to accept the denial of the honorable and learned senator.

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Senator KEATING

- I am bound to accept the explanation. I am exceedingly glad to find that Senator Symon does not base his argument for the maintenance of black labour on its cheapness, though I certainly understood him to argue in the way I have just indicated. In his quotations from some high authorities, Senator Dobson cited the opinion which was distinctly given by one authority, that when steam-ship companies utilize the Lascar or other coloured labour for the purpose of coming through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, the motive of cheapness is underlying their action. I think that the real question at issue, so far as such companies, are concerned, is whether or not they can get black labour more cheaply than white labour. I certainly do not think that the question bears on either the capacity of the white man to do the work, or his reliability. We have had a great deal of argument from the other side as to the awkward position in which the Commonwealth will be placed if an amendment of this character is carried. Senator Clemons addressed himself at some length to clause- 67, which he said the Postmaster-General relies on as a last resort by which he can get the mails carried, even on vessels employing coloured labour. We have been told, since this question arose, that even allowing that the Minister will have that power, if he uses it he will actually be entering into an arrangement that is in violation of the spirit and the letter of this amendment. In my opinion, clause 67 makes no provision for arrangements or for contracts. It empowers the Postmaster-General to send the mails on vessels at the prescribed rates, and it imposes a statutory obligation on the master of a vessel to carry the mails at those rates. There is not the mutual assent which is absolutely necessary to the existence of a contract or an arrangement. But we are told that then we shall have nothing like the regularity and the frequency which we would have from a subsidized steam service; as if the boats ran to Australia simply for the purpose of carrying the mails ! We have been told by two or three honorable senators that the subsidy is a mere trifle to the companies, that it is of no account in their financial operations. If that be so, then whether they get a subsidy or not, they will come here with their customary regularity for both passengers and goods. They would come here, too, at a fast rate of speed, because they would have that unlimited competition amongst them which our free-trade friends tell us always produces the best results for the people to be served. There would be a competition amongst the different lines, and the line that ran at the highest rate of speed, and with the greatest regularity and frequency, would necessarily get the most patronage by the public. Senator Pearce pointed out that, by requiring white crews in the mail steamers, and preferably British and Australian crews, we were doing what was good work in connexion with the possible navy of the Commonwealth. The reply given to that argument was that unfortunately at present we have no Australian Navy, that we are contributing a mere flea-bite to the Imperial coffers for the purpose of maintaining the Australian auxiliary squadron, and that legislation in the direction indicated is a matter of British import, and not of Australian import. That is simply the outcome of what, I think, is characteristic of many honorable senators who have opposed the amendment - an inability or a reluctance to look beyond the immediate present. I think the argument of Senator Pearce was addressed, not to the immediate present, but to the possibility of Australia taking its part in its own and the Empire's naval defence in the future.

Senator Sir William Zeal

- It cannot take its own part.

Senator KEATING

- I admit that so far as naval defence is concerned we are not in a strong position, but I think Senator Zeal agrees with me and with Senator Pearce that we have not to legislate "for the moment, but for to-morrow, for next year, and for the centuries to come. We are legislating at the commencement of the Commonwealth, and we must not be bounded by a consideration of the immediate present, but by a consideration of the future of Australia and the Empire. To my mind, the reply which was given to Senator Pearce's argument was very ineffective indeed. Then we have been told that this legislation is nothing more or less than persecution, that the Commonwealth is going out on a mission of persecution of a number of poor unfortunate coloured people. I could quite understand the argument if the term "boycott" had been used. Do we purpose boarding these ships to throw the lascars or coloured labourers off, or to put them to the knife ? We simply say to the companies, " You can bring your boats here with your

coloured labourers, be they lascars or any one else. The question of their landing and staying here will form the subject of other legislation, but if you employ them on your boats, understand that you can never enter into a contract with us for the carrying of our mails." Is that persecution? Have we not the right to say with whom we shall enter into a contract? If we choose to say that we shall not enter into a contract with an individual, or a class of individuals, are we persecuting them? I fail to see that arguments of that character can be addressed with fairness to the issues before us.

Senator Sir William Zeal

- We are persecuting the Imperial Government, because we do not pay the whole subsidy.

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Senator KEATING

- I have pointed out, and I think Senator Zeal heard me, that the Imperial Government has appointed a commission to inquire into and report on the question whether they should further subsidize Steamers which carry coloured labour. I think we are not quite right in assuming that the opinion of Downing-street is against this Bill, as one honorable senator said. We have been told that if we exclude these men from the mail boats, we must follow a certain course of action or policy with regard to the excluding of aliens from Australia. It is not a question of excluding any one from any boat. It is simply a question of binding ourselves as to what particular classes we shall not contract with. Several honorable senators have endeavoured to drag in what very often proves a useful argument, the loyalty of those who vote one way or the other. An honorable senator who sits behind me was a little premature in bringing such a question as loyalty or disloyalty into a discussion of this character. I claim to be as loyal to Australia and to the Empire as any honorable senator, no matter how loud may be his protestations, but I think that loyalty consists not in constantly using grandiloquent phrases about the power, the glory, the extent, the resources, and the capacity of the Empire, but in doing the best within our sphere, having regard to the rest of the Empire. We have to do our duty within our own limits. We are not here to legislate for the whole of the Empire, but to legislate with a jealous care of the destinies of Australia. If we legislate in directions that we consider are in the best interests of the Commonwealth of Australia, we are doing our part in the Empire machine. We are doing our part within our own sphere to the best advantage, and leaving those who have other spheres allotted to them to do their best. In that way we are demonstrating, to the fullest extent, our loyalty to the Empire of which we are a part.

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Senator O'KEEFE

- One honorable senator, in addressing himself to this subject, in the course of a forcible and logical address, has said that senators belonging to a certain party have come here with orders upon certain subjects, willingly received and accepted. At the outset, I wish to say that, although I belong to the party indicated by the honorable senator, I did not come here with orders of any kind whatever except the order inherent within me to do what I thought right, according to my own convictions, for my fellow-men. The same honorable senator referred in rather a sarcastic strain to some honorable senators voting with the Government on this question, and he inferred that they were going to vote against their own convictions, simply to give the Government their support. I wish to say in that connexion that it does not matter to me what attitude the Government take up on this or any other question that may come before the Senate while I am a member of it; I am not here to give my vote for this or any other Government, but in favour of principles I believe in, and according to my own convictions, which I was sent here to support. One of the planks of the platform I placed before the electors of my State was that of a white Australia, as we all understand the term. I never wavered in my adherence to that principle; and although it is said that the employment of white or coloured people upon the steam-ships carrying our mails does not involve the question of a white Australia, I say that it certainly involves the question of a white man's policy. An honorable senator yesterday, in placing his views before us, appealed to our instincts of justice, and asked us not to put such an insult upon hundreds of millions of our fellow subjects. Altogether too much has been made of the point that these lascars are our fellow subjects. I refuse to accept them as what they are represented to be. Although they may be our fellow subjects, I refuse to accept them, in the sense that Senator Dobson does, as my fellow citizens. Great Britain has never conferred on them the same rights of free citizenship that the British Crown has conferred upon me, and, I believe, never will. Perhaps it will be interesting, in the light of the arguments so frequently used in this and another place

in regard to the millions of what are called our fellow subjects in India, briefly to call the attention of honorable senators to the opinion of an eminent authority, who has lately issued a work on the Indian Empire. These opinions are valuable, and I should like to direct the attention of honorable senators to them, as they are quoted and commented upon in a review published in a well-known Melbourne journal last week. The writer of the book is Mr. Meredith Townsend. His work is entitled Asia and Europe. I direct attention to this review because the argument has been used here and in another place - it was emphasized with great force and eloquence by Senator Dobson yesterday - that we are going to do a great injustice to our fellow subjects in India. His argument was that the lascars seamen are more to be relied upon than many white sailors, and that in the future we might have to rely upon them in times of war. It is only with the object of refuting that argument that I am going to read two or three lines from this article. But, before doing so, let me assure my honorable and learned colleague, Senator Dobson, that I admire his magnificent loyalty to the Empire. In my opinion I am as loyal to that Empire as he is, but at the same time, I think I can still be loyal to that which is the chief part of the Empire so far as I am concerned - the continent of Australia. Being an Australian citizen, having Australian aspirations, and being loyal to Australia, is not at all inconsistent with loyalty to the Empire, even to the extent that my honorable and learned friend and colleague is loyal. Surely Senator Dobson will not refuse the right to any Australian native to hold the opinion that he is entitled to love Australia even more than he should love the British Empire. I am not using this argument in any personal way ; but last night Senator Dobson happened to make use of a phrase which I took to myself, because I had previously used the words he referred to. He said that he had heard it remarked in this Chamber that we should put Australia first and Great Britain afterwards. I admit that I have said that I am an Australian first and an Imperialist afterwards ; but I maintain that that does not take away from my loyalty to the Empire, and it would not prevent me or any Australian native from taking up arms in association with other subjects of the Empire in fighting for that Empire, if it were necessary to do so, in Australia or anywhere else. In the article reviewing Mr. Meredith Townsend's book, to which I have alluded, it is said -

But the pregnant fact remains that the English are to-day as much aliens in India as they ever have been. They are inexorably divided from the people of the land. They are but sojourners, each one passing away from the scene in a few years, founding no homes or family in the country. The Indian Empire, as Mr. Townsend insists, is simply the 70,000 white troops and the small army of " politicals " and policemen who administer the King's justice and rigidly keep the peace within the widening borders. The absence of white settlement is generally attributed to the climate, but even in the salubrious region of "the hills" no one pitches camp permanently. That is the opinion of a writer in a journal which, I suppose, is one of the most loyal journals in the British Empire - namely, the Australasian. Again, he says - As the author puts it - "Englishmen live on the sultry plains of New South Wales ; Americans, who are only Englishmen a little desiccated, are filling up the steaming plains of Florida ; Spaniards have settled as a governing caste throughout the tropical sections of the two Americas ; Dutchmen dwell on in Java - but the English, whatever the temptation, will not stay in India."

Once more the reviewer says - Such reflections half persuade us that Mr. Townsend is in the right. The Empire, he maintains, "hangs in the air," supported by nothing but the minute white garrison and the unproved assumption that the people of India desire it to continue. Do they ? The trend of his reasoning is that the loyalty on which we thus depend is really non-existent.

That is the trend of his reasoning. My honorable and learned friend, Senator Dobson, says that we can rely on the loyalty of the lascars in possible future wars between the British Empire and other nations, but I would call attention to what this writer says -

The Sepoys were the petted of the British rulers, yet they turned against us the most hungrily in 1857, slaying the very officers who would have guaranteed their fidelity in the teeth of all argument.

Does Senator Dobson guarantee their loyalty?

Because the English interfere so little with the social customs of the governed races their reign lasts. But the European no more merges himself in the Asiatic than the Asiatic in him. Only, when the emente does come, Asia knows there is but one way to beat the Europeans - viz. , to exterminate all within reach. Hence the massacres which accompany racial insurrections, whether in India or China. In the Mutiny our men asked no quarter, proposed no terms, but simply fought on with determination to die or to emerge

once more as rulers.

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I have quoted. these extracts in refutation of the assumption that Great Britain can rely on the loyalty of these lascars in the future. It will be infinitely better for Great Britain to depend upon the loyalty of her white British subjects than on her subjects of the Indian Empire, who, although our fellow subjects, are not our fellow citizens.

Senator Sir William Zeal

- The honorable senator is giving them' a reason for being disloyal if he supports this amendment.

Senator O'KEEFE

- The honorable senator's interjection is certainly not made with his usual discrimination and good sense. The reviewer also says of the Asiatic -

For 3,000 years he has made no new conquest over nature, carried science no higher, developed no new and rectifying social idea, invented no new scheme of life. The Arab, the Indian, the Chinese is precisely what he was when the white men first became conscious of his existence.

I agree with these sentiments, and I am not going to accept our fellow subjects in India as my fellow citizens. I am not going to accept the argument that the Empire can depend on the loyalty of lascars in the future as well as she can depend upon the loyalty of her white subjects. It is said that we are going to make ourselves look ridiculous in the eyes of the world ; but those honorable senators who use that argument seem to forget that a great nation like America has had similar laws in existence for many years.

Senator Clemons

- She has beautiful shipping arrangements.

Senator O'KEEFE

- She has, and I do not say so in the sense that Senator Clemons means. Her mail steamers have better arrangements for their crews than are to be found on many British ships. In addition to these shipping laws in America another law exists which provides that in all vessels subsidized to carry United States mails a certain proportion of the crew shall consist of American citizens. After all, it is a question of money.

Senator DAWSON

- And price.

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Senator O'KEEFE

- It is a question of money and price. If the Australian Commonwealth, in furtherance of this desire, is willing to pay for white crews being employed on ships carrying our mails, there will be no difficulty whatever in giving effect to our wishes. We do not know what the increased cost will be, but I take it that the sentiments of Australia, as expressed so clearly at the Federal elections, have gone forth to the world ; that it is known we shall be prepared to pay a little more, if necessary, in order to have a white Australia and a white man's policy connected with Australia. In addressing themselves to this very question, experienced members of the House of Representatives have pointed out that if British ships provided better accommodation for their crews there would not be so much difficulty in securing British sailors. That argument will not be contradicted by any honorable senator who knows the vast difference between the conditions prevailing- in British and American vessels subsidized for the carriage of mails.

Senator DAWSON

- It is the high rates paid to American mail ships that enable them to provide better accommodation for their men.

Senator O'KEEFE

- It is purely a question of accommodation and price. If these companies are willing to pay a decent wage and to provide decent accommodation for their crews they will have no difficulty in engaging British sailors at any time they require them. I think that every honorable senator is called upon to express his opinions upon this question. We know that the division is going to be very close, and every honorable senator is justified in giving the reasons which influence him in recording his vote. Just allow me to say, in conclusion, that the main argument used against this amendment has been what is described by Senator De Largie as the Red Sea argument. We have had the statement trotted out, both yesterday and to-day,

that white stokers are not so well fitted as lascars to work in the stoke-holes of vessels going through the Red Sea. I must thank Senator Keating for reminding me of what I might have forgotten, and of what Senator Clemons - who is an ardent supporter of a white Australia, although he does not agree with this method of accomplishing it - is aware. As Senator Keating reminded us, we have white men doing work which, even in our own cool climate, is infinitely worse than that performed by lascars or other stokers on vessels going through the Red Sea. I have seen men standing over the mouths of the smelting furnaces at Mount Lyell for eight hours a day, and swallowing the sulphurous fumes in an atmosphere as hot as that of any stoke-hole. I have seen them, day after day, going away at night and resuming the same work next morning. I do not say they do it without injuring their health, but they have to do it. They receive a decent wage for the work, and they keep to it for several years.

Senator Clemons

- The honorable senator is comparing two things by his knowledge of one.

Senator O'KEEFE

- I freely admit that I have not been through the Red Sea, but there are plenty of men who have seen both classes of work, and they assure me that the work at the Mount Lyell smelters is as arduous as that performed in the stoke holes of the mail steamers.

Senator Clemons

- Why does not the honorable senator quote Senator McGregor? That honorable senator said he had worked in the stoke-holes of vessels going through the Red Sea.

Senator O'KEEFE

- But he has not seen the men working in the sulphurous fumes of the Mount Lyell smelters. I honestly believe that the men who do the work at these smelters, not only in Tasmania, but in many other parts of Australia, could also do the work of stoking on board mail steam-ships just as effectively as lascars do it, and I shall vote accordingly.

Progress reported.

EXCISE BILL

The PRESIDENT

- I have to announce that I have received the following message from the House of Representatives : -  
Mr President

- The House of Representatives returns to the Senate the Bill intituled "An Act Relating to Excise," and acquaints the Senate that the House of Representatives has agreed to Nos. 1 and 3 to 26 of the amendments made by the Senate, and has agreed to amendment No. 2 with the amendment indicated by the annexed schedule, in which it desires the concurrence of the Senate.

W. HOLDER, Speaker.

Schedule - Clause 23a. - Excisable goods and goods liable to duties of Customs may in prescribed cases and subject to the prescribed conditions be delivered free of duty or subject to such duty as may be prescribed for use in the manufacture of excisable goods.

Amendment - After " such " insert " lower."

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Vice-President of the Executive-Council

Senator O'CONNOR

. - As this is an urgent measure, in accordance with the standing order applicable thereto, I move -  
That the message be taken into consideration forthwith.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

In Committee :

Senator O'CONNOR

- It will be remembered that the Senate amended the Excise Bill, by inserting new clause 23a. That clause has been accepted by the House of Representatives, but an amendment has been made, inserting the word " lower " before the word "duty," in order to make it clear that the Minister may not prescribe a higher duty than that which is imposed by the Tariff Act. It seems to me to be right that that should be made perfectly clear. It is on the lines of a suggestion made by Senator Pulsford when the matter was before us previously. I think it is an amendment we ought to agree to. I move -  
That the committee agree to the amendment of the House of Representatives.



Senator CLEMONS

- I think I am justified in asking Senator O'Connor to give us his assurance that this amendment is unimportant. The matter has been sprung upon us without the slightest notice, and while I do not wish to interpose any obstacle in the passing of this urgent Bill, I think the Vice-President of the Executive Council should assure us that the amendment is of no great importance. I am perfectly willing to accept his assurance that it is an amendment about which no discussion would have arisen if we had had full time to consider it. I am quite willing to place myself in that position, and take the word of the Vice-President of the Executive Council on the matter, but I think we ought to have it.

Senator PLAYFORD

- The amendment appears to me to be of no importance one way or the other, because, as I read the clause, we provide for making a rebate, and that means that we are providing for some lower payment than has been prescribed in some Act of Parliament. Putting the word "lower" in only carries out the intention of the House in passing the clause. We could not put anything else in, because necessarily it must be a lower payment.

Senator O'CONNOR

-In answer to Senator Clemons, I may say that it is merely a verbal amendment. It has not to do with rebate merely, as Senator Playford suggests, but to prevent duty being paid twice for Customs and Excise. There is power in the Minister to prescribe the duty to be paid under certain conditions, and this makes provision that in charging the duty it shall not be a higher duty than is required to be paid under the Customs Act. It is necessary to make that perfectly clear, and on that ground I think we should accept the amendment.

Senator CLEMONS(Tasmania). - I accept what Senator O'Connor has said, but I am glad that Senator Playford has risen, because by his lightning diagnosis of the effect of the amendment which, according to Senator O'Connor, is incorrect, he has entirely justified.

Amendment agreed to.

Resolution reported and adopted.

POST AND TELEGRAPH BILL

In. Committee(consideration of House of Representatives amendments resumed) :

Senator Sir WILLIAM ZEAL

- Sharing the belief enunciated by Senator O'Keefe, that senators who propose to vote either one way or the other upon this question should express their opinions, I shall in a brief way place before the Senate the reasons why I am compelled to vote against this proposal of the Government.

Senator McGregor

- The honorable senator is wrong.

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Senator Sir WILLIAM ZEAL

- Perhaps I am wrong ; but if I can show Senator McGregor that I am wrong through the same conscientious motive for which he supports the amendment, the honorable senator, with his love of fair play, will admit that I am as much entitled to my opinion as he is to his. I bring this question before the committee on the broadest grounds, and I appeal to honorable senators not to do injustice to their fellow men, and rather to support those principles which from day to day they are constantly enunciating - the upraising of the masses and benefiting of the poorer classes, not only of this, but of every community Is it for the benefit of the masses that this vote will be taken to prevent men, whether black or white, from earning their livelihood under the same flag which we all serve under and honour? How can honorable senators, who are members of the labour party, support this proposal, seeing that they are from day to day endeavouring to do their best to raise up men, and give them a status they had not had in the past 1

Senator Higgs

- What about the unemployed 1

Senator Sir WILLIAM ZEAL

- On the grounds I have stated I claim the support of honorable senators who are members of the labour party. The question of the unemployed has not to be decided now, but there is a great probability that some of the unemployed do not want labour. I have met men in Melbourne amongst those who are called the unemployed, who have remained here from month to month, and the last thing they are wishing to get

is employment. They desire simply to go round as permanent mendicants, and to live upon the charity of the people. Whether that be so or not, I say that on broad humanitarian grounds labour members should not support this proposal. What are we proposing to do ? We in Australia contribute a small subsidy to companies for the carrying of our mails, and yet we are attempting to coerce the mother country, and make her observe conditions which are not for her benefit. Is that honesty or fair play, or is that the way in which labour members would themselves like to be treated ?

Senator Staniforth Smith

- What is the difference between the Australian and the British subsidy ? There is very little.

Senator Sir WILLIAM ZEAL

-The Australian subsidy is supposed to be something like £60,000 or £70,000 or £180,000 a year. If we were paying the whole of the cost we would have a right to dictate terms, but when we provide only a small amount of the subsidy, we have no such right. Why should we not treat the British Government in this matter in the same way as we wish to be treated ourselves ? I have heard some talk of what the great American nation would do under the circumstances. I am glad the remark has been made, because it enables me to tell senators sitting in the labour corner, that the American Government undertook one of the greatest wars ever known, to support and vindicate the rights of the masses of their fellow black citizens. It was to do away with slavery that that great war was entered upon. Will honorable senators tell me that it is repugnant to the spirit of the American Constitution that people, who are black, shall not be entitled to votes, and to the privileges of their laws in the same way as white men ? America spent £300,000,000 or £400,000,000 in putting an end to negro slavery, and yet honorable senators supporting this amendment ignore this fact and apparently wish to bring about a state of things which will tend to redevelop slavery, because they will not allow men having black skins, to work for a livelihood even under undesirable conditions, I am ashamed of those who profess to support the labour cause, and who take up so unworthy a position.

Senator Higgs

- We are ashamed of the honorable senator.

Senator ZEAL

- So the honorable senator may be, but I state my opinions honestly, and I feel from the bottom of my heart that it is not a proper position for labouring men to take up, to oppress men, whether their skins be black or white. We have had a lot of talk about what Australia is going to be. It is going to dictate to the world, and deny fair representation to other peoples. Let the British Government take away the ships that are now riding in Sydney Harbor, and where will this great Australia be ? Why a great portion of Queensland and of Western Australia would be taken in two years time by one of these coloured races.

Senator DAWSON

- Nonsense !

Senator ZEAL

- It is not nonsense. It is within the power of a nation like Japan to come here and starve out the whole of Australia, and we have no means whatever to resist her.

Senator Higgs

- What about our sheep and cattle ?

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Senator ZEAL

- We cannot live on sheep and cattle. We sell our sheep and cattle to pay our debts. Some honorable senators now apparently want to do a gross injustice to men who are British subjects equally with ourselves. They want to deprive these poor, unfortunate men of the means of earning their bread. I am ashamed of Senator McGregor, the leader of the labour party, that he should take up such a position as will prevent a man from earning his living, simply because his skin happens to be black. Is that the principle which dominates the leaders of the working classes ? If it is, I am not with them. I am with them, heart and soul, to do everything I can to bring about a white Australia, by legitimate and honest means, but not by resorting to a subterfuge, or by driving these unfortunate lascars out of their work. I would rather retire from public life than be a party to such an injustice to my fellow men.

Senator McGregor

- We are in great trouble about that.

Senator Sir WILLIAM ZEAL

-The honorable senator is in trouble. I know that his instincts are honest and fair, and if his judgment was not warped there would be no stronger supporter of the side I am advocating now - the side of the downtrodden and the oppressed.

Senator Pearce

- We hope to see the honorable senator over in this corner yet.

Senator Sir WILLIAM ZEAL

- I shall certainly never come to that corner to support honorable senators in what seems to me such a manifest and gross injustice. With reference to the Imperial question, what has the old country done for us ?

Senator DOBSON

- She has given us Australia.

Senator Sir WILLIAM ZEAL

- She has given us Australia, and she has given us protection which does not cost us a shilling, and when we have been in trouble the citizens of the old country have done their best to help us. Does Senator McGregor remember that 40 or 50 years ago a proposal was made to the British Government to parcel out Australia and hand over a very large portion of it to the French Government? What did Lord John Russell, the Premier of the day, say to that ? When asked what part of Australia England claimed, he said that she claimed the whole of Australia, and Australia, being under the aegis of the British flag, has remained in peace and prosperity through the support of the grand old mother country. I was born and brought up for a time as a citizen of the old country, and my dearest wishes and aspirations are for her ; second only is the interest I have in Australia, and rather than do an injustice to the old country, or what I consider to be a grievous wrong, I would retire from public life altogether and take no further part in its proceedings.

Senator BARRETT

- Upon the last occasion on which this matter was considered by the Senate, I was one of those who voted against the Government, and for the principle of a white Australia, which we have been advocating yesterday and this morning. I do not know that anything I can say on the subject will affect any vote in the Senate, and until a few minutes ago I was almost inclined to allow the question to be put, believing that no useful purpose could be served by prolonging the discussion. However, as we have been asked to express our opinions upon this important matter, which affects, not only every member of the Senate, but the great body of the people outside, I am prepared to express my opinion with regard to it. We have heard some extraordinary arguments during the course of the discussion. Some of the arguments that have been used have been very good, and to the point, but others have been very wide of the mark. The party in this Senate to which I have the honour to belong has been appealed to from various stand-points. We have been lectured this morning by an honorable senator who has practically told us that we have come here under certain orders, that we are voting under certain conditions, and that if it were otherwise probably our opinions would be differently expressed.

Senator Clemons

- If the honorable senator is referring to me, that is exactly the opposite to what I said. I said that honorable senators willingly obey their orders.

Senator BARRETT

- The honorable and learned senator went out of his way, I think, to lecture the members of the labour party. I resent such lectures at his hands. We should concede to one another that we are honest in the opinions which we represent. To hear honorable senators talk, one would think that this question had come before the Australian public only quite recently. We are told that this is simply a cry that has been got up by the labour party to deceive the electors of Australia, when honorable senators know full well that it has been before the public for a considerable number of years. It is a question on which the public have spoken out, and I believe the great bulk of public opinion is in favour of the action we are taking.

Senator DAWSON

- Queensland has made an answer anyhow.

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Senator BARRETT

- Queensland has made an answer, and I think other States have made an answer. I agree very largely with Senator De Largie when he said that even though this principle may not be carried to-day, the rising tide of public opinion will force it upon this Parliament in such a way that it will have to give its assent. Like a good many more I was not uncertain on this question when I sought a seat in this Senate. I said plainly and unequivocally that I was in favour of a white Australia. I declared also that I was in favour of the total exclusion of an alien population from Australia, and I am ready to-day and at all times to advocate that opinion, because I honestly believe it is the right policy. The question has been asked in this discussion, why do we palter and temporize! It is simply a matter of political expediency with a good many. There is a number of men not only in the Senate, but outside, who honestly believe that total exclusion is the right policy, but as a matter of political expediency they are not prepared to go so far. I believe that total exclusion is the best thing for Australia, and I am not going to be led away by any sentimental appeal. I believe Senator Zeal is sincere in the position he has taken up, but we have to remember that with us Australia is the first consideration in respect to this and every question. If we believe that it is right to take this course, I think we are bound to do so. To my mind we have heard a good deal of lip-sympathy. There are men who, when they seek the suffrages of the electors on public platforms, will declare that they are in favour of a white Australia, of keeping Australia for the Australians; but -when you come down to details, all sorts of excuses are uttered why we should not carry out that policy.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- This has -nothing to do with a white Australia.

Senator BARRETT

- I take the contrary view. It is an essential part of a great question, and I am arguing it from that stand-point. Yesterday we heard a good deal about the mercantile marine, and about the honour and glory of the British Empire. We heard a lot of hysterical utterances, especially from Senator Dobson. We have been accused, because we prefer to look to Australia as the first consideration and the rest of the Empire as the secondary one, of not being loyal. The reflection on our loyalty has been met and answered in very admirable speeches. The party to which I have the honour to belong is as loyal as any section in the Senate. We give place to none in respect to that sentiment. To parade loyalty is simply nauseating, but the accusation deserves at all times to have the denial given to it. . . We are told that we have not enough sailors to man the ships that sail under the British flag. The answer has been given by Senator Glassey, as well as by others, that it is simply a question of paying white men white wages. If you concede fair conditions, you will find plenty of men prepared to take to a seafaring life. Does not Senator Dobson know that every morning, at the docks in London, no fewer than 20,000 men are trying to obtain employment? Many of these men have been edged out of the seafaring life. Why? Simply because in the mercantile marine, in the majority of cases, they are prepared to give employment to all except Englishmen. Every morning, at the docks in London, no fewer than 20,000 men are edging against one another, and fighting their way to obtain a paltry pittance. Even if the argument which has been advanced were true, I believe that if the necessity arose, as it did lately in another direction, and England wanted men to man her fleets, all over the world you would find volunteers ready, in time of stress, to take the position which they should take. That argument has been met and answered all round. I had intended to speak at considerable length, but the arguments I wished to submit have been placed before the committee in a better way by others. I am prepared to vote for the amendment of the other House. The Government have been twitted because they have changed front. Why have they done so? Simply because they see that the great body of the members of the other House represent Australian sentiment, and therefore they are prepared to give effect to their wishes. I hope that the amendment will be agreed to.

Senator STYLES

- I should not have risen but for the remarks made by Senator Clemons. I think he accused honorable senators of voting for the acceptance of this amendment because they wish to support the Government. That does not weigh with me a single jot. I came here to vote for the acceptance of that amendment because I know it is right, and not from any feeling of loyalty to the Government or otherwise.

Senator CLEMONS

- That is not exactly what I said.

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Senator STYLES

- I was the first member of this Parliament to bring forward this question. In my speech on the address in reply last May I pointed out that the seven colonies had decided to do away with the employment of coloured labour on mail boats if the Imperial Government would consent. At a conference in Tasmania five years ago, the seven colonies - for New Zealand was represented - unanimously decided that it would be a good thing for Australia if coloured labour were excluded from the mail boats. The conference consisted of the Postmaster-General of each colony, assisted and advised by the Deputy Postmaster-General of that colony ; and, I repeat, they unanimously decided to ask the Imperial Government in its next contract to exclude coloured labour from the mail boats. They cabled home to the Imperial Government, which declined to do anything of the kind. The conference said in reply to the Imperial Government " We are compelled to do as you want because we are not able to pay the whole subsidy ourselves, but we do not think you are right for all that." If honorable senators will remember that fact - that the whole of the colonies now forming the federated States, together with New Zealand, unanimously decided upon this matter - they will recognise therein an additional reason for supporting the amendment. We should be warranted, if there were no other reasons than those given by the conference, in voting for the amendment "made by the House of Representatives.

Senator Clemons

- And by so doing, on the honorable senator's own showing, risking the Bill.

Senator STYLES

- Senator Zeal has made an appeal to the labour party.

Senator Sir William Zeal

- I did not appeal to the honorable senator, at any rate.

Senator STYLES

- It would have been of no use if the honorable senator had done so. He spoke of the uprising of the lascars in Eastern India. " Blood is thicker than water," and the labour party in this State want to upraise their own countrymen.

Senator Sir William Zeal

- Is that what the honorable senator wants ?

Senator STYLES

- I shall have to point out to the honorable senator that interjections are highly disorderly, as I think I heard him say in this Chamber several times, when he had the honour of presiding, as he has not now, over a legislative- body which met here. We are all on an equal footing while we are members of the Senate, and the fact of one honorable senator having occupied a greater position in days gone by does not add to our dignity or to our intelligence.

Senator Sir William Zeal

- That is very witty !

Senator STYLES

- It is not very witty, but it is very true.

The CHAIRMAN

- I would ask the honorable senator to confine his remarks to the question.

Senator STYLES

- I cannot allow these pin pricks to pass without reply, and do not intend to do so.

Senator HIGGS

- I suppose honorable senators are afraid, after last night's little diversion, that I am about to read another poem by a certain great military officer, but that is not my intention. What I am anxious to bring under the notice of the committee a little more fully is the case of the Quetta, which was mentioned in the speeches of Senators Keating, Glassey, and others. Senator Dobson has asked what that has to do with the case under notice. But an attempt has been made to show the committee that lascars and Cingalese are more reliable than white men.

Senator Dobson

- Nothing of the kind. All that is beside the mark.

Senator HIGGS

- It is not an unusual occurrence when the honorable senator makes use of remarks in one speech for

him to come up the next day, and say that he never said anything of the kind.

The CHAIRMAN

- If Senator Dobson makes a denial of any statement, the honorable senator must accept his denial.

Senator Dobson

- I was speaking at the time about the stokers, and comparing white men with lascars in that capacity. I quoted a remark by the chairman of the P. and O. Company with reference to stokers, and also what Mr. Marshall of the Orient Company told me about their condition. Simply because I have spoken of the stokers, who are only a handful of men-

The CHAIRMAN

- -The honorable and learned senator has no right to enter into an argument.

Senator Dobson

- Because I spoke of the stokers, every honorable senator who has replied to me has said that I believe black men to be superior to white, Is not that an unfair comment?

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Senator HIGGS

- Senator Dobson has given the authority of some directors of shipping companies, but I want to quote from the full report published in the Brisbane Courier of 3rd and 4th March, 1890, in which is described the wreck of a vessel called the Quetta. There was a perfectly calm sea at the time the ship was wrecked, but while 158 persons were saved 133 persons were drowned. I am prepared to show from that journal that if the lascars and other coloured persons were anything like what they have been reported in this chamber to be, many more persons, including women and children, would have been saved. The report shows that William Gregory, a passenger on board the Quetta, says that when the vessel struck, " the coloured men were unmanageable." H. Wrathall, from Townsville, stated that he was sitting on the front hatch with his wife and child when the vessel struck. He says -

Terrible confusion ensued, especially amongst the women. The coloured men were particularly unmanageable. One lifeboat was lowered to the water's edge, but it was rushed by the Javanese, causing it to swamp. My wife jumped off the ship into the sea, and I followed shortly after, with the child in my arms. I never saw my wife afterwards. When in the water I was held by a coloured man, and in the struggle lost my child, which was drowned.

Senator Clemons

- They were black passengers who caused the trouble.

Senator HIGGS

- The honorable and learned senator says these were black passengers. Let us take the opinion of the Brisbane Courier, given in a leading article on Tuesday, 4th March.

Senator Walker

- That is four days afterwards. They had not sufficient information then. I know more about the case than the honorable senator does.

Senator HIGGS

- I do not think the honorable senator knows more about it than the Brisbane Courier, which published a full account of the disaster. News of the wreck was received on the Saturday afternoon, two days before this account was published. It will be remembered that the vessel was wrecked not a great distance from Brisbane, near Torres Straits. The Brisbane Courier in its leading article says -

With regard to the boats no fault can be found with the launching of them. It was nobly and wonderfully done considering the space of time at the disposal of the crew. But the manner in which these boats were rushed by the Javanese passengers and lascars--

Senator Clemons

- Not rushed by the crew.

Senator HIGGS

- I do not wonder that the honorable and learned senator takes exception to the quotation of these extracts. He gave us no facts during his remarks, but only a lot of theory and fanciful statements about the danger the Empire would be in if we refused to subsidize these companies. The writer goes on to say -

But the manner in which these boats were rushed by the Javanese passengers and the lascars, who are

said even to have kept out others who strove to find a place, reminds us that under the existing mail contract, European crews only are to be employed on the mail boats. Presumably, this was intended to be the last trip of the lascar crew of the Quetta, and some of the incidents of the wreck serve to show the wisdom of having insisted upon the change. It is a relief to read of the noble conduct of one of these coloured men, who saved the infant child of the ill-fated Mrs. Copeland, stripping himself to cover it, and caring for it like a mother. All honour to the black man with so white a heart. But there can be no question that, whether from natural temperament or creed, these natives of India are far inferior to the white man in moments of peril.

Let us contrast the conduct of some of these lascars and Indian coolies with the action of the British seamen. The men we should like to see fill all the positions on mail vessels did not rush the boats. The engineers did not crowd out women and children in their over anxiety ; they died at the post of duty.

Senator Walker

- Every engineer was drowned. I know a good deal about the case.

Senator HIGGS

- Yes; but the honorable senator is under a wrong impression when he thinks that the passenger named Miss Lacy was attacked by white men on the raft.

Senator Walker

- I am under the impression that she was attacked by Cingalese on the raft.

Senator HIGGS

- I understood that it was the honorable senator who complained that I was raising a question which it would not be wise to go into - that Miss Lacy had been attacked on a raft by white men.

Senator Walker

- I am not referring to Miss Lacy, but to somebody else.

Senator HIGGS

- Miss Lacy, as the honorable senator admits, was attacked by Cingalese on the raft.

Senator Walker

- She saw signs that she had better get away.

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Senator HIGGS

- Their conduct was so suggestive that she preferred to risk death in the sea to remaining on the raft with these gentlemen who have so many defenders in this Chamber, Under the heading, " Died at the post of duty," a gentleman deemed it only fair to write to the newspapers a letter drawing attention to the gallant conduct of the engineers. He says : -

It is too late now to deal with those who are already beyond the power of praise or calumny, but it will be a satisfaction to the bereaved relatives of the heroes who have nobly died to be assured that, wherever the British language is spoken, or a brother engineer exists, the heroes of that awful three minutes in the engine-room will go down to posterity as a bright and honored example, and be an incentive in ages yet to come to marine engineers of all nationalities to preserve in times of peril and danger the fair fame of their less fortunate brothers. From a lengthened experience as a ship-engineer, I am aware that, when any serious danger happens on board a steamer, the first impulse of the engineers off duty is to rush below and stand by, and no doubt this was so when the Quetta first struck. We can therefore picture the more vividly the awful position of the poor fellows practically buried in the bowels of the ship, and with little or no idea of what was taking place on deck until suddenly awakened to a sense of the dreadful emergency when the waters rushed in on them in torrents. Then, indeed, like rats in a hole, without ever a chance to struggle for life with a seething and maddened mass of humanity shouting for help that was not at hand overhead, these martyrs to duty died game at their posts, unflinching and unappalled.

I ask honorable senators who are so anxious to preserve the employment of lascars on boats, if they can produce any case like that in the history of the lascars.

Senator Clemons

- Yes.

Senator HIGGS

- I ask if they can produce a single instance of that kind; and bear in mind that it was not a Cingalese or lascar, but a Javanese who saved the life of the child Copeland.

Senator Walker

- It was one of the crew who saved the child, and the crew were lascars. I happen to know the fact.

Senator HIGGS

- I ask honorable senators to produce any instance in the record of coloured men that will compare with the one I have cited.

Senator Dobson

- What has this to do with it?

Senator HIGGS

- The whole of Senator Dobson's speech last evening was in the direction of proving that lascars and Cingalese stokers are more reliable than white stokers, who from the nature of their occupation feel it necessary to go ashore and get drunk whenever they can.

Senator Dobson

- What I gave was the evidence of the two leading companies of the world.

Senator HIGGS

- These companies do not employ lascars out of a feeling of patriotism and of glorification of the Empire, but simply because they are cheaper. We object to them because they are cheaper than white men. We object to them because of race caste if you like. We consider our own people superior to them in every way.

Senator Fraser

- So do I.

Senator HIGGS

- I am glad to hear that Senator Fraser disagrees with Senator Dobson on that matter ; but when honorable senators talk about our disloyalty to the Empire in wishing to keep out these blacks, let us remind them that the time is not very far distant when the British people, after they have secured a suffrage such as we have, will put into power a Cabinet who will advise the King to agree to legislation of this kind.

Senator Dobson

- And dismiss the black servants at the Palace ?

Senator HIGGS

- The black servants should never have been in the Palace, and it is a disgrace to white people to have them there.

Senator WALKER

- Very much of what Senator Higgs has said is outside the question. I object to this amendment, on free-trade principles among others. I am delighted to be able to corroborate what Senator Higgs said of the engineers on the Quetta - every man stuck to his post. I do not for a moment think that the British race are not superior to the lascars in the case of emergency, but for certain work, such as Senator Dobson referred to, in the Red Sea, I fail to see that because a man has a white face he is a bit better than a man who has a black face. It is only fair to say that the little child of Mrs. Copeland was saved by one of the lascar crew, and not by a Javanese. Mr. Corser, a solicitor from Maryborough, distinctly states, in his account of the wreck, that had it not been for the Javanese rushing the boats many more might have been saved. It was the Javanese deck passengers who rushed to the boats.

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Senator Higgs

- It was both.

Senator WALKER. - I am quoting Mr. Henry Corser, who was a passenger on the Quetta. I am glad to say that Senator Higgs is right in regard to the raft incident, but Miss Lacy in private life has, in addition, given a very similar account of the treatment she received from persons not black. The honorable senator is not so well informed on that subject as I am. A marine engineer, who has been in China seas and elsewhere, has told me that he never found in rough weather his Chinamen in the stoke-hole were less reliable than Europeans. I do not wish to introduce any personal element into the discussion. The Javanese on the Quetta were returning from their employment on a Queensland plantation to Batavia, where they came from. There were so many of them on board that they rushed the boats. Let it be borne in mind that the whole thing did not last three minutes. Is it fair, in a case of emergency, to animadvert on



a nationality because of a single incident ? Who was it that rushed the boats the other day off Alaska ? It cannot be said that it was the darkies. I do not think it is fair to draw these invidious comparisons between black and white, when probably if the black had the choice they would prefer to be white. I consider that the labour party ought to be christened the Australian Democratic Tories, because they are tories as well as democrats, and it is well that the fact should be known.

Motion (by Senator Dawson) proposed -

That the committee do now divide.

The CHAIRMAN

- I am obliged to put the motion, but I think I ought to acquaint the committee that two honorable senators have indicated their intention to move amendments prior to that before the Chair. Senator Neild proposes to insert in the new clause the words "to agreements limited for single voyages nor," but Senator Macfarlane has indicated his desire to strike out the words "Or arrangements," and Senator Dobson has expressed his intention to move an amendment.

Question - That the committee do now divide - put. The committee divided -

Ayes ... .. 13

Noes ... .. 15

Majority ... .. 2

Question so resolved in the negative.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- I regret that the Government saw fit to join in the attempt to stop discussion on this matter.

The CHAIRMAN

- The question immediately before the committee is the amendment, and I must ask the honorable senator to confine himself to it.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- I shall obey the Chair, but I confess that the ruling appears to be more strict than we have been accustomed to. The honorable senator who referred just now to the wreck of the Quetta was somewhat unfortunate. It is a great pity that that case has been brought into the discussion, because, although what the honorable senator has read was written within a few days of the event, and is no doubt true, it absolutely proves nothing. It simply means that on that occasion some men, whether white or black, did not act as we think they ought to have acted. On the other hand it has also clearly proved that some men of dark colour did act heroically. If we desired to meet that reference surely the honorable senator must know that we should have no difficulty in quoting even recent cases where unfortunately white crews have behaved themselves in a most disgraceful manner. Are not honorable senators aware of the case to which reference was made in the papers only recently, in which the white crew of an American vessel took possession of the boats, would not allow women and children to enter them, and even used their knives freely upon them? I would not have made any mention of it, had not some senators tried to make so much of this case of the Quetta.

Senator De Largie

- Was that boat subsidized by Australian money?

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Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- What has money to do with this matter? I am really ashamed of the honorable senator that he should speak of money in connexion with such a matter.

Senator Higgs

- What was the name of the vessel ?

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- The Mohic, or some such name.

Senator Higgs

- The honorable senator is not very sure of his facts.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- If the honorable senator doubts it he has only to look at the papers published within the last four months. This kind of instance proves nothing, because we all know perfectly well that in cases of panic, men, whatever their colour may be, lose their heads, and act in a manner of which they are afterwards

ashamed.

Senator O'Keefe

- Who are the more likely to lose their heads, men of white or men of black race?

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- Well, if we go back to cases even of drilled and disciplined troops, those who have given some little attention to the subject will know that in some cases, under panic, drilled troops have done disgraceful things. But that argument amounts to nothing. It simply means after all that whether whites or blacks we are all human. To come more particularly to the question, one is very much tempted to refer to the unfortunate position in which Ministers in this Chamber are placed by the extraordinary action of their colleagues in another place. I need not say anything more about it than that I deeply regret it and that they have my sympathy in their unfortunate position.

Senator Drake

- We share that with the blacks.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- It has been rightly said that we have to pass such laws as are necessary for the existence of the Commonwealth. I take it for granted that we can all heartily approve of that, and we shall take care to do our duty in that respect. It has also been said that there is no wish on the part of Imperial Ministers to do anything contrary to the wishes and interests of the Commonwealth. That is also a satisfactory statement. But the very fact of anxiety on the part of the Imperial Government not to run counter to the wishes of the Commonwealth surely carries with it some duty for us? To my mind that duty appears to be that we should not do anything we can avoid which would prejudice Imperial interests. In this case we are taking a very unusual course, to say the least of it, a course distinctly antagonistic to the known wishes of the Imperial Government, and one which must, to a certain extent, adversely affect Imperial interests. Because this is a distinct declaration by one part of the British Empire, the new Commonwealth of Australia, to have nothing whatever to do with our fellow subjects of a different colour, whether they be in India or anywhere else. We intend by this legislation absolutely to taboo them, and to prevent them from earning their livelihood on British ships coming to these States. To that extent we are not reciprocating the handsome manner in which the British Government seeks to act towards the Commonwealth. What is the reason for this action by a certain section of the community? Might I say that it is a section of the community which does not represent the whole of the Commonwealth? I grant that the labour representatives do honestly represent a very large section of the people of the Commonwealth, but they do not represent a majority of the people. Still they are seeking, as they have a perfect right to do in Parliament, to force the views of this particular section upon the whole of the Commonwealth.

Senator O'Keefe

- Many others have held the same views, and have expressed them in both Houses.

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Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- I am not finding fault with the honorable senator, but I think the honorable senator, and those who act with him, are too much in the habit of saying "we are the people of the Commonwealth." I have heard that over and over again. What is to be obtained by this amendment? The result, immediately at all events, will be that perhaps 200 or 300 persons of colour now employed on these ships will be sent to the right about, and that white persons will be taken in their place to perform some of the most unhealthy and unsatisfactory work that can possibly be conceived. The fact undoubtedly will be that these 200 or 300 vacancies will be filled, not by British seamen - very few British seamen, and I venture to say fewer still of inhabitants of Australia, who know better than to take such work, would offer, but will be filled very largely by aliens. Those who have talked of the increase to the strength of the Empire which will follow from the adoption of such a course as this cannot have thought the thing out. It cannot be to the interests of the Empire that positions of such importance as those of stokers should be filled by aliens who, in the event of war, would have to be neutral, and would consequently have to leave their posts. I go so far as to say that if it were possible, I should like to have the whole of the British Navy and the mercantile marine of Great Britain manned by none but British seamen; but we know that that is absolutely impossible. Figures have been quoted, some of which were not correct, as to the number of seamen available now. It may not be known to some honorable senators that the proportion of the population of Great Britain in the

commercial navy is considerably less than it was 25 years ago. There is not the same inclination on the part of the population of Great Britain to embark in naval employment that there used to be in the olden days. This is one of the points which must be remembered in considering the grave danger which may be involved in a proposal like this, so far as the commercial marine of Great Britain is concerned. I think it was Senator Higgs who said that the shipowners are ready to give employment to all except British seamen, and that it is a matter of wages. It is perfectly true that, to a certain extent, it is a matter of wages, but the reason why it is a matter of wages is on account of the competition of foreign ships. These foreign ships, manned by foreign sailors at a low rate of pay, cut into the British trade, and the British shipowners have to do one of two things. They have either to engage these foreign seamen at a rate of wages which British seamen will not accept, because they can be better employed apparently, or they must go out of the trade altogether. That is the position exactly, and, as a consequence, there are 36,000 foreigners now in the British commercial marine, and about 36,000 coloured men, most of whom are subjects of the Empire. When we consider 36,000 in a total of about 240,000, it is not a very large proportion ; but I am sorry to say that, in consequence of the competition to which I have referred, the percentage of the aliens employed in British ships is steadily increasing. I should like to see the proposal suggested in the old country carried out, namely, that every ship should be compelled to have on board a certain number of apprentices, so that we should gradually educate a class of British seaman whom we should all like to see upon our vessels. I want to say a word as to what we are to obtain or not to obtain under this proposal. We certainly shall be able to secure the discharge of 200 or 300 men, most of whom are subjects of the Empire. That is not a very large gain surely? But let me put the other side. Against that we shall have seriously to inconvenience all the passengers who come out by these steamers through the Suez Canal, because it has been clearly proved beyond a doubt that the white stokers cannot and do not keep up the necessary speed in coming through the Red Sea.

Senator DAWSON

- All moonshine.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- Has the honorable Senator had any experience of it ?

Senator DAWSON

- Rather !

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Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- Then all I can say is that his experience is absolutely against the experience of all with whom I have met, and against my own experience, and I have made the voyage a good many times. There is no doubt that one effect of this amendment will be to lengthen the voyage in the way I have suggested, and it will tend to lengthen the voyage in another way. The P. and O. and Orient Companies have the larger portion of their trade with India and China, and they will no doubt continue to use coloured crews on board their vessels, and in consequence, will not be able to bring our mails any further than Colombo. What are we to do with the mails when we get them to Colombo ? We must either start a Commonwealth line of steamers to run to Colombo to bring mails and passengers from there, or we must allow them to be brought by the existing French, German, and American lines of steamers, in all of which, more or less, coloured men are employed . We know perfectly well what would happen if a Commonwealth line of steamers was formed to run between the Commonwealth and Colombo. It would not alter matters very much. It is true "that the mails might be brought on by such a line of steamers as a matter of compulsion under the contracts, but passengers would not put up with the inconvenience. We cannot possibly run large steamers such as those employed by the French, German, and American companies, and as the passengers would have to change, they, without the slightest doubt, would change, not into the Commonwealth boats, but into these foreign boats. So far, therefore, as the passengers are concerned, we should absolutely gain nothing, for they would come by foreign boats manned by coloured crews. All this, too, means delay, and we shall in consequence lose, in addition, a very large amount in interest, inasmuch as the voyages will be increased by from live to seven days, and there will be a loss of interest on the whole of the remittances, the whole of the gold, and a large portion of the produce going home. This, in the aggregate for the whole Commonwealth, will be found to be no small item of absolute loss. I have dealt with the effect of the amendment, in connexion with naval defence, and there can be no doubt whatever that if we adopt the

system proposed, so far from increasing the reserve for manning our Royal Navy in time of war, we shall absolutely decrease it by the large number of aliens who will be employed upon these boats, and who will suddenly have to leave their employment ; instead of our having, as we might continue to have under the existing system, an equal number of reliable citizens of the Empire, although not of the same colour as ourselves. For certain work in connexion with ships these coloured men are just as good as white men, and in some respects they are even better, because they can stand the heat a good deal better. I must confess I sometimes feel ashamed of the irrational antipathy displayed to the coloured races. "We all have more or less of it, and we all feel a certain pride of race, which I trust we shall always have, but these views, to my mind, can be carried too far, and our honorable friends connected with the labour party do carry these views to an absurd length. They seem to fancy that nothing good can come from a coloured race. They even impugn the courage of the race, and appear to ignore the fact that the building up of the British Empire has been largely due to the assistance given by our coloured soldiers.

Senator GLASSEY

- Not a bit of it.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

-Col. Cameron. - What about the Indian Empire ?

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- Was India won entirely by white soldiers ? Has Senator Glassey read history at all ? Does he not know that the Empire is largely maintained at the present time not merely in India but also on the West Coast of Africa, by coloured troops, because they can stand the climate? Surely the honorable senator must recollect the Indian Mutiny ? Was it solely crushed by white soldiers? Did we not have to rely, and did not we safely rely upon the Sikhs and Ghorkhas ? Was it white men alone who defended Cawnpore? Did not the white men in that instance rely safely upon the assistance of our native troops ? Was it white bayonets alone that took Delhi ? Did we not have to rely very largely, and did not we rely with safety upon the Sikh troops at the seige of Delhi ? Has the honorable senator ever read " Forty-one Years in India," by Lord Roberts ? I could go on to remind the honorable senator of events more recent. Take the recent Terah campaign. There were very few white troops engaged in that. There were 60,000 troops engaged, of whom the larger proportion were native troops. Need I remind honorable senators of the defence of Chitral ? It was not carried out solely by white troops. There were very few white troops engaged. Need I remind honorable senators of what occurred recently in China? Who were the first into the compound in Peking ? Eight of our Sikh soldiers. In the face of all these things are we to think that the Native troops of the Empire are not worthy of our consideration ? Has it not become a boast on their behalf that those troops are " always true to their salt ?" On many and many an occasion they have shown themselves thoroughly worthy to fight alongside their brothers-in-arms the white troops. There is only one other matter that I need touch upon, and that is the statement of Senator Higgs, that the crews on board the P. and O. boats are subjected to great cruelty. I have travelled several times on those boats, and I unhesitatingly give the statement an absolute denial.

Senator Dobson

- It is grossly untrue and inaccurate, and it ought to be withdrawn.

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Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- It should be stated that the crews on board the P. and O. boats, when they go home to their villages, are looked after there by the company, who from time to time re-engage them. If the men were treated badly or cruelly, depend upon it they would not go back to the work again. The same families have continued in the work from generation to generation, until they have come to regard themselves as part and parcel of the P. and O. Company. It must be remembered, too, that the company employs a greater number of these coloured men on their boats than they would employ if they had white crews, and there are sometimes three generations on board a boat. I have looked into the matter, and I am quite convinced that it is not on account of economy that these men are used, because the larger number employed more than compensates for the comparatively small wages paid to them. I suppose that every honorable senator has fully made up his mind as to the way in which he intends to vote, but I shall deeply regret it if this amendment is carried. I shall consider it a distinct blot upon our first legislation, and it will augur very ill to my mind for the future of the Commonwealth.

Senator MACFARLANE(Tasmania).Yesterday I spoke only a few words, hoping that this discussion would not be prolonged. I do not intend to repeat anything I said before, but I should like, with the concurrence of Senator Neild, who has an amendment before the Chair, to move another amendment for the omission of the words " or arrangement." That would enable the Postmaster-General to arrange with black men who have to do with horses in Queensland, and would enable him to put mails on ships carrying black men when no contract is made. I hold that under the proposed new clause the Postmaster-General cannot put any mail on a vessel without some arrangement.

Senator Drake

- Yes, we can.

Senator MACFARLANE

- There is an arrangement made if the Government give the company owning the vessel some consideration for carrying the mails, and I cannot see what objection there can be to having these words eliminated. I do not think the clause as it stands is workable in the interests of the Commonwealth, and I shall vote for its omission altogether ; but the amendment I propose will effect an improvement.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment (by Senator Macfarlane) proposed -

That the words " or arrangement "be omitted.

Senator DRAKE

- The only effect of this amendment would be that the provision it is proposed to put in the Bill would not apply to clause 14. That is to say, the amendment would not prevent the Postmaster-General from making an arrangement with the Postmaster-General of the United Kingdom or the authorities of any British possession or foreign country for the conveyance of mails, and from taking advantage of contracts made by the British Postmaster-General for the same purpose. In fact, the amendment strikes at the whole clause we have been discussing. It is simply a question whether vessels carrying our oversea mails, shall carry white or coloured crews. The striking out of the words " or arrangement " would be directly contrary to the views expressed by a great number of honorable senators with regard to the desirability of having our mails, carried by steamers with white crews.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- Of course, Senator Macfarlane's amendment involves the question we have been debating, and therefore I do not propose to deal with the whole matter again after expressing the views I did yesterday. But I wish to say that I intend to support the amendment, not only on the large ground - which, of course, we shall deal with in deciding whether or not we shall have the clause at all - but also on the narrower ground that it will undermine the mischief the clause is calculated to do, and will untie the hands of the Postmaster-General and the department to a certain extent in administering the measure with regard to entering into postal arrangements.

Senator De Largie

- It will nullify the clause.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- I should be glad if it did, but I am afraid it will not. It will leave intact what has been called the cast-iron rule laid down in the measure, prohibiting the Postmaster-General from entering into any contract with any ship-owner for the carriage of mails if the ship-owner employs coloured labour for the purposes of the traffic. On the general grounds of the desirability of doing what both Ministers have strongly advocated - leaving them a free hand in dealing with this question in the interests of the community - I shall support the amendment.

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Senator DOBSON

- I should like to ask the Postmaster-General whether he has sufficiently considered the amendment proposed by Senator Macfarlane with regard to clause 67 1 I was rather struck with the plain manner in which the honorable and learned senator stated that what was done under clause 67 would not be a contract, and would not be an arrangement, but would simply be compelling certain steam-ships to carry our mails at prescribed rates. It appears to me that clause 67 to a very great extent is ultra vires ; that there is no power for the Commonwealth or the High Court or any other court to give effect to it ; and that no mails can be carried under it unless there is a kind of arrangement or contract. There will have to be

bargaining and if the P. and O., or the Orient Company, or any other company say, " "We are not going to carry your mails for this prescribed rate, and we will see you further first," what will happen ?

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- If the mails are put on board, what obligation is there on the company to deliver them ?

Senator DOBSON

- As I understand, when the ships get outside the 3-mile limit, they can drop all our love letters and drafts to the bottom of the ocean, and I do not see what our Postmaster-General can do. It has been stated before that this clause would be quite inoperative, and would make us a laughing stock. It behoves the Minister to explain to the Senate more explicitly than he has hitherto done what would be the effect of the Bill if the amendment were agreed to. I believe most firmly that clause 67 has not the effect which the honorable and learned senator has told us it has. I believe there must be an arrangement made before we can compel the companies to carry our mails ; otherwise I do not think we can compel them to carry our mails at all. I should also like to ask the Postmaster-General to explain the meaning of the words " only white labour shall be employed in such carriage." Do they mean that only white labour shall be employed in stoking or working the ship, and that the vessel cannot have a black cook, or scullery man, or steward ?

Senator Lt Col Neild

- It means that they cannot even blacklead the galleys.

Senator DOBSON

- Suppose the Union Steam-ship Company have a dozen or a score of more or less coloured men who are stewards, or suppose they have Maories on board, will this clause stop the Commonwealth from entering into contracts with that company for the carriage of our mails t

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- It will vitiate a contract if entered into.

Senator DOBSON

- If a contract cannot be entered into on account of one unfortunate blackfellow being employed on any ship, the Auditor-General would have the right to call the attention of Parliament to the fact if a mail subsidy was paid to a company employing such a man. At present the mails between Tasmania and New Zealand and the Commonwealth are carried by the Union Company.

Senator Walker

- That is a New Zealand company.

Senator DOBSON

- It is a most important question for the Postmaster-General to answer, whether he can and will under this measure in future, if the amendment is carried, renew contracts or enter into new ones with a company that has half-a-dozen or a dozen black men in its employ 1 I should also like to ask another question - will it make any difference if these men are naturalized British subjects 1 Will it make any difference if they are Maories. I take it that this clause, in order to shut out, cruelly as I think, the lascars who are our own fellow British subjects, will also shut out the Maories, who would absolutely have been citizens of the Commonwealth if New Zealand had decided to join us. It is simply a question of colour, and whether a black man belongs to New Zealand or to India, we are proposing to decline to pay money to a ship carrying our mails so long as a coloured person is employed upon it. It is due to the committee that the Postmaster-General and the Vice-President of the Executive Council should most clearly explain these points.

Senator MACFARLANE(Tasmania).I should like to ask a question. New Caledonia belongs to France, and the mails to that island are carried by the boats of the Messageries line, which employs coloured labour. Is the Postmaster-General going to put the mails of the Commonwealth on board those vessels t If so, he must make some arrangement with them.

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Senator DRAKE

- Senator Dobson has asked me to give him my opinion with regard to the operation of this amendment if it is accepted, and put into the Bill. I have already spoken two or three times on the subject, and I think it is rather unreasonable at this late stage of the debate to expect me to go over the ground again. I suppose that Senator Dobson does not require to have a statement of my opinion before he makes up his

mind which way he intends to vote ?

Senator BARRETT

- The Postmaster-General answered the questions in the first discussion.

Senator DRAKE

- I am going to put the matter in the briefest possible form. I entirely disagree with Senator Dobson in thinking that clause 67 is ultra vires. If it were, it would be a very strange thing that the point has never been raised before, because there is a similar provision in the Acts of other countries. The practice of putting mails on board steamers not under contract has been pursued for a great number of years. I take it that all ships within our ports are subject to Our laws, and they cannot, when this is the law of the country, refuse to take a mail on board at the prescribed rate of pay without making themselves liable to a penalty of £50 for breaking the law. If they go outside the 3 - mile limit, and throw our mails overboard, and never come back again, there is a possibility that we might never be able to get at them. But seeing that such a thing has never happened yet, and is not at all likely to happen, I think we are wasting valuable time in discussing it. I have already answered the question about the interpretation of the proposal that every contract will contain a condition that a ship will be worked by white labour. I have expressed the opinion that if a contract is made under those conditions it would mean that the persons employed in carrying the mails should be white men. I do not think it would go to the extent of preventing aboriginals being used to run up horses in connexion with our inland mails, but if a contract were made under these conditions it would be on the understanding that the persons engaged on board ship in carrying it out should be white men. As to the statement that the Union Steamship Company have only perhaps a dozen coloured men in their ships, I reply that if that is a fact it will be a very easy thing for the company, if they wish to obtain our contracts, to get rid of their dozen men.

Senator Dobson

- What about the naturalization question ?

Senator DRAKE

- I am not called upon to define here what is a white man. I think I have already answered Senator Macfarlane's question. The Messageries steamers constantly carry our mails between Australia and New Caledonia, and between here and Europe. They already carry them under a clause similar to clause 67. There is no contract with them to carry them, but hardly one of them leaves our ports without having our mails on board.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- The Postmaster-General will not be able to avail himself of that any longer.

Senator DRAKE

- I have given my opinion over and over again that the word " arrangement " refers to an arrangement under clause 1 4, which enables the Postmaster-General to take advantage of contracts made by Great Britain and other countries, and does not refer to clause 67. Under clause 67 there is no arrangement in that sense of the word. When a vessel leaves our shores it is compelled by law, if we require it to do so, to carry our mails at the prescribed rate, and there is no question of arrangement at all.

Senator CLEMONS

- I have risen to ask the Postmaster-General how he will get over the aboriginal question, about which he has said so much ? Is he going to paint the aboriginals white? Because he says he is going to use them.

Senator DRAKE

- In my opinion, if an aboriginal is used to run up horses he is not engaged in carrying the mails or in carrying out a contract.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

- The splendid inconclusiveness of the Postmaster-General is my excuse for taking up a little of the time of the committee. Last night when I was speaking Senator Drake withdrew some observations as to clause 67, and, therefore, in my extreme innocence, I was induced to refrain from discussing a point which the honorable and learned senator, as soon as I had concluded, proceeded to discuss. I should not like to throw out any suspicion of an idea that the honorable and learned senator was trying to get the better of me in the matter, but certainly that was rather the outcome of what he did.

Senator Higgs

- The honorable senator himself withdrew when the poem was read.

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Senator Lt Col NEILD

- I do not want any " Higgs-asperating " interjections. I can quite understand that the gentlemen coming from Queensland may have very excellent reasons for quarrelling with me because I had, in the strongest terms that verse permits, denounced the iniquity of the Queensland slave trade. I suppose by way of rejoinder I would be in order if I quoted a few hundred lines of a jingle from which a few extracts were delivered last night in a se rio comic manner. I desire as far as possible to avoid falling into the error, which some honorable senators seem disposed to do, of regarding the Senate as a circus. I wish to address myself seriously to the kind of topsy-turvy argument of the Postmaster-General. He told us last night, in the plainest language, that under clause 67 he s empowered to order the P. and O. Company maugre their black crews to carry his mails, and he said that it would not constitute an agreement or an arrangement to do so.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- If so, it neutralizes this clause altogether.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

.- Exactly, and I think I shall have to vote with the Government to perpetrate this absurdity. I would point out to the Minister that he cannot read clause 67 apart from clause 68. The former fixes the obligation, the latter provides the payment. Will he as a lawyer, not as a politician, give me his opinion on a transaction which, under clause 67, involves the taking charge of mail matter, giving a written receipt for it, and under clause 68, requires payment? His leader told us yesterday that he had, under certain stress of political weather, to jump Jim Crow, to come up the other side and be as eloquent in opposition to himself as he had been in opposition to Senator Glassey a few weeks ago. I ask Senator Drake, not as a politician, but as a lawyer, to tell me if the undertaking to carry, under written receipt, mails from Melbourne to Timbuctoo, or to some other place, and payment made and received, would not constitute a contract.

Senator Drake

- The clause only applies to vessels that are not under contract for the carriage of mails.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

- I should like to have a definition from a lawyer, rather than a politician - not on a play of words, but on an actual fact. The Minister says that the two clauses do not refer to the carriage of mails by vessels under contract.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- He does not say so.

Senator Dobson

- Read the first paragraph of clause 68.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

.- It says-

But nothing herein contained shall entitle the master of any vessel under contract for the carriage of mails to receive any such payment.

I do not see how that affects it at all, but even if it did, my argument is that the written agreement under clause 67, and the payment under clause 68, constitute a contract.

Senator Drake

- There is not a written agreement ; it is only a receipt.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

.- If my honorable and learned friend can order his letters to be taken on board any ship with any kind of crew, and can pay for the delivery of them, having a written undertaking that they are to be delivered at a certain place--

Senator Drake

- No.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

- The Minister says ho is not to have an agreement for their delivery at a certain place.

SenatorDobson.-The clause says he can require them to do something.

Senator Drake

-To give a receipt.



Senator Lt Col NEILD

.- What paltering with words ! What is the receipt to be? Is the record of the transaction with the Post-office to be "Received 10 bags of mails"! Is it the intention of the Minister to throw the letters about the ships of the world in that manner, to place them on a vessel of any ownership, and with any coloured crew, and simply to take a receipt "Received so many bags of mails"! The receipt, he knows perfectly well, must contain a clause for their delivery at some place. Whoever heard such nonsense uttered ! Really it makes one angry that time should be wasted in discussing a question which is being dealt with in so uncertain and so unsatisfactory a manner. But if he can do this, why is he, by the clause he asks us to adopt, trying to cut the throat of his own argument under clauses 67 and 68? The lawyer says it is an arrangement. The Member of Parliament says it is not a contract. It is an arrangement, he says, to put mails on board a steamer and take a receipt for them and pay for their carriage.

Senator Drake

- I did not say anything of the sort.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

.- I wish the Minister was blessed with a better memory. While he says he can do that with any ship or crew under the sun, he is fighting for a clause which says that he shall not do it.

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Senator Drake

- I did not say it.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

- What are the Government doing ? We are driven to the conclusion that they are doing exactly what they did before. They came to one conclusion ; they are throwing it over, and are starting exactly on the opposite track. It is a novel proceeding, and perhaps it is a novel Government. I have told both Senator Macfarlane and Senator Dobson that I am quite willing to give way to them. For the moment my amendment is out of the way, but I feel that the statement of Senator Drake as to these clauses conflicts so absolutely with the intentions of the amendment of the other House that I hardly know, not so much where we are, as where we are asked to follow.

Question - That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the clause - put.

The committee divided -

Ayes ... .. 15

Noes ... .. 13

Majority ... .. 2

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment negatived.

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Senator DOBSON

- move -

That the amendment be amended by the insertion after the word "that, " line 4, of the words " except as regards the employment of stokers on vessels."

When my honorable friends affirmed that I preferred a black sailor to a white sailor, and when they affirmed that I asserted that a black sailor is superior to a white sailor, they misquoted me. The whole of my remarks referred to work in the stoke-hole. I prefaced them by saying that I did not think that in warm climates and in the tropics stoking was a desirable business for white people, and that experience went to show that it so demoralized them that they gave way to drink. I quoted the opinion of Mr. Marshall, secretary of the Orient Company - not my own. His opinion, founded on many years' experience, was that as these men were being dragged by the police to the vessel waiting to perform its contracts, they looked more like animals than men. And the experience of the chairman at home was that one half of a white crew could not be relied on when they were wanted - that always about one-half were either deserting from the vessel or were not in a fit state to perform their duties. I know nothing about these men, I simply quoted what I was told, as I believe, by reliable authorities. I think it is a little ungenerous for members of the labour party, who know what these crews are, who know that elections are dominated by a foolish, stupid cry sometimes, to misquote me. I am sure they did it unintentionally, but some of them seemed to desire to repeat the thing, again, I believe, quite unintentionally. I regret that some of them did not take

my word at once, as to what I did mean. As sure as I submit myself to another election I shall be asked in some part of my constituency, " Did you not say that you preferred a black sailor to a white sailor?" I shall have to say that I said nothing of the kind, but if we give these inaccurate statements half an hour's start we can never catch them up again, and they damage a man. I repeat the words of my honorable friend, Senator Zeal, that if I cannot justify my position in voting against what I believe to be unstatesmanlike, unjust, cruel, and harsh, before any constituency in the Commonwealth, I shall be content to remain out of public life. Some honorable senators have complained, and perhaps rightly complained, that I did not sufficiently connect some of my remarks in stating that we might damage the Empire in what we are doing. I have here a leading paper from Tasmania, which puts in one or two terse sentences exactly what I mean. It says -

For the plain fact is that the mother country has a very large number of Asiatic and African subjects, to some of whom she has been indebted for help in' the time of need, and to whom she may some day have to look, should the long threatened European combination against her ever become an active reality. There are Indian Princes whose assistance might, in certain quite conceivable circumstances, be of priceless value, for they might help greatly to save the Empire, and in doing so perhaps shield the Commonwealth of

Australasia from deadly peril..... It seems, therefore, imperative that the Empire should be held firmly together as one complete whole, and that nothing should be done to wound the feelings of any of its peoples, or awaken their indignation, at being regarded as unfit even to land on the same soil which the working men of Australasia propose to consecrate to themselves.

I think that must be perfectly apparent to anybody who regards the Empire as a whole, and I have always understood that we have been congratulating ourselves that one great effect of the South African war, whatever may be its cost in blood and men, is that it has consolidated, united, and consecrated the Empire. In dealing with a matter of this sort, we should, as the Mercury contends, treat the Empire as one and undivided, and we should do nothing which will show to 280,000,000 of our fellow subjects of the King that we do not think them good enough to work on board steamers whose head-quarters are 12,000 miles away, and which, once a week, touch at the shores of the Commonwealth of Australia. I am afraid it is useless to speak further on the amendment now before the committee, but I appeal to honorable senators to listen to what the evidence is, and it is absolutely proved beyond a doubt that this stoking business, more than any other employment my honorable friends could name, is degrading to the working man, because it makes him even more intemperate than he would otherwise be inclined to be.

Senator McGregor

- That statement is untrue.

Senator DOBSON

- It is degrading to working men mentally and physically, and I ask my honorable friends if they have any consideration for their white brothers, if they desire to talk of the dignity of labour, if they desire to raise their white fellow men in the standard of civilization and in mental and moral calibre, to vote for my amendment, and raise no objection to the employment of the few coloured stokers who may be found absolutely necessary to work our steamers when a vessel is going through the tropics if white men are not forthcoming. That is all I ask. In the spirit of fair play, in the spirit of justice, in the interests of the white men, and in the interests of the dignity of labour, I ask my honorable friends to vote for my amendment.

Senator DRAKE

- I think this debate has worked out pretty thin, and it is certainly very late for the honorable and learned senator to propose this amendment. We have discussed the whole subject of the employment of coloured labour both in the stoke-holes and in other parts of the vessel, and I think every honorable senator must have made up his mind on the subject. I notice that a number of honorable senators have been very much exercised in their minds as to what is going to happen under one of these contracts if an aboriginal happens to round up some horses, or a coloured cook is found in the whole of the Union Steamship Company's fleet. Yet they are now plainly asked to accept an amendment which would mean that all the steamers under contract with the Commonwealth may have any work they require done by coloured labour. If honorable senators are going to accept the principle of the amendment at all, they should accept it entirely.

Senator CLEMONS

- I desire to ask the Postmaster-General whether he will tell us when the existing contracts with the P. and O. and Orient Companies will expire, so that members of the Senate may be in a position to hazard a guess as to what Government may or may not be embarrassed by the amendment?

Senator Drake

- In 1905. I am not able to inform the honorable and learned senator as to what Government will be in power at the time.

Senator WALKER

- I desire to ask the Vice-President of the Executive Council whether we have the right to legislate in such a manner that any native of Australasia, whether white or black, shall be debarred from being employed on board any ship that does business with us?

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Senator O'Connor

- Yes.

Question - that the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted - put. The committee divided -

Ayes ... .. 13

Noes ... .. 16

Majority ... .. 3

Question so resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

- I move -

That the words " to agreements limited to single voyages nor " be inserted after the word "apply," line 6. The object of the amendment is to exempt from the operation of the clause agreements -or arrangements that may be made in respect to the carriage of mails for a single voyage. It in no shape or way affects the question of a contract for a term, but it makes it absolutely clear that the Postmaster-General shall be in a position legally to make use, for the convenience of the people of the Commonwealth, of any vessel that may be available for the carriage of mails. The committee has evidently decided that there shall be no contract for a period except within the meaning of the clause, but I think there is no desire that a single voyage arrangement should not be accepted. There may be delay in carrying out an annual contract or a contract for a longer term as contemplated, and surely we want to be in a position to have our mails carried by a single voyage arrangement in order that communication may be kept up between the Commonwealth and other parts of the world 1 Wherever possible the Postmaster-General will, of course, enter into contracts for terms - of years, but I do urge upon the committee that it is desirable there should be no misunderstanding as to the right of the Commonwealth to make use of any vessels for the carriage of mails for a single voyage when that may be for the convenience of the people.

Senator DRAKE

- I must oppose this amendment. I think it would be a very dangerous amendment, for it would leave an opening for the evasion of the law. Under it we could go on continually making contracts for single voyages.

Senator FRASER

- Why not?

Senator DRAKE

- I perfectly understand that that is what some honorable senators want, but I cannot agree to it. If we are going to accept this principle, we must apply it in the case of every contract. I have before stated that we have already plenty of power, under the 67th clause, without any contract to put mails on board any steamer leaving our ports.

Question - That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted- put. The committee divided -

Ayes ... .. 13

Noes ... .. 16

Majority ... .. 3

Question so resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

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Senator Lt Col NEILD

- I have by one or two speeches, and three or four votes, done my best to get this proposition into what I consider would be a more workable condition than that in which it is submitted to us. We have apparently exhausted amendments, and we come now to the main question. I shall vote in a manner that perhaps may seem a little unexpected, but I will give my reasons for the vote I am about to give. The Government have a majority in both Houses, and they propose to take a certain course. I do not see why they should not have the full benefit of the responsibility they assume. I consider that the proposition submitted is one that can never be effected. It is merely a doctrinaire proposal. Whatever advantage it may have to those who submit it, I cannot conceive that it will ever be of any public usefulness ; but as the Government like to run their heads into what appears to me to be a kind of legislative cul-de-sac, I propose on this occasion simply to help them in a course that I do not believe in. I think the proposal is an absolute nullity and piece of folly, but I will vote for it merely to help the Government to do an act of folly.

Question - That the committee agree to the amendments of the House of Representatives - put. The committee divided.

16

AYES

12

NOES

Majority ... .. 4

AYES

NOES

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT

Election Return

Motion (by Senator O'Connor) proposed -

That the Senate do now adjourn.

Senator FRASER

-I beg to draw the attention of the Senate to a return prepared by one of the departments in respect of the federal elections. It is utterly wrong - wrong by tens of thousands. The return ought to be corrected. I have a copy in my hand with a corrected statement attached to it.

Senator O'Connor

- If the honorable senator will show me the errors I will look into the matter.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

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15:48:00

Senate adjourned at 3.48 p.m.