

11th Day.]

[19 June 1911.]

## THERE WERE ALSO PRESENT :

LORD LUCAS, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies ;

Sir FRANCIS HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies ;

Mr. H. LAMBERT, C.B., Colonial Office ;

Sir H. LLEWELLYN SMITH, K.C.B., Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade ;

Sir WALTER HOWELL, K.C.B., Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trade ;

Captain Sir A. J. G. CHALMERS, Board of Trade ;

Mr. A. LAW, C.B., Foreign Office ;

Sir H. H. RISLEY, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., India Office ;

Mr. J. PEDDER, Home Office ;

Rear-Admiral Sir CHARLES OTTLEY, K.C.M.G., M.V.O., Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence ;

Mr. ATLEE A. HUNT, C.M.G., Secretary to the Department of External Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia ;

Mr. J. R. LEISK, Secretary for Finance, Union of South Africa ; and

Private Secretaries to Members of the Conference.

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CHAIRMAN : Gentlemen, the resolution \* by the Government of New Zealand which appeared on the Agenda issued on Saturday as to coloured races being encouraged to remain domiciled within their own zone is withdrawn by Sir Joseph Ward ; he does not want to discuss it.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I propose, instead of moving a formal resolution, to refer to it on the question which is before us to-day.

“That the self-governing oversea Dominions have now reached a stage of development when they should be entrusted with wider legislative powers in respect to British and foreign shipping.”

CHAIRMAN : As to the resolution of New Zealand, which appears first to-day on the corrected Agenda as to British and Foreign Shipping, I understand that it would be for the convenience of Sir Joseph Ward and probably of the Conference, that Lord Crewe should open by making some general remarks on Indians within the Dominions.

EARL OF CREWE : Mr. Harcourt, I understand it is desired that at the beginning of the proceedings I should make a few general observations, as to the principles upon which this question of Indian emigration and immigration into the Dominions is founded. Perhaps I may begin by asking for some measure of indulgence from the Conference, because I have been away from my work for some time owing to an illness from which I am happy to say I am beginning to recover, but which has laid me by for some little time. I may, therefore, I am sure, claim the indulgence of the members of the Conference.

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It so happens that I have had the advantage or the disadvantage, as the case may be, of having observed this question from two different standpoints; first, for some years when I held the office which Mr. Harcourt now holds, and since then as Secretary of State for India. In both offices I have reached the conclusion that there is no question which could be discussed at this Conference more difficult, or I might even, I think, venture to say in some of its aspects, more critical than this question of Indian immigration, and the treatment of those of the Indian races, or indeed of any foreign native race who find themselves within the various self-governing Dominions.

I remember some years ago making a speech at a large Colonial dinner, in which I enforced that view, and went so far as to say (if I remember aright) that if there was any question which seemed to threaten not merely the well being, but the actual existence, of the Empire as an Empire, it was this difficulty between the white races and the native races, because, I ventured to point out, as between the Dominions and the Mother Country there could be no question, whether it was a question of commerce or a question of defence or any other of the questions which we now discuss, which could not be solved by goodwill and by good sense on both sides. But this particular question, especially as regards India, is in one sense insoluble; there is no complete and perfect solution of this difficulty between the white races and the various native races. Now, I understand that this memorandum which I have before me has been circulated to all the members of the Conference, and those who have read it will recognise that it deals both with the general principles of the question, and also with special instances of difficulty which have arisen in the various Dominions with regard either to the ingress of Indians or to the treatment of Indians when they are there. In my present remarks I propose to confine myself entirely to the first branch, namely, to the question of the principles, because the particular instances involved are more matters for the special Department involved either here or in the Dominions themselves, and from that point of view they are less suitable, perhaps, for such general discussion as takes place here as being more of a domestic character.

Now I desire to say first, that I fully recognise—as His Majesty's Government fully recognise—two facts: the first is, that as the Empire is constituted, the idea that it is possible to have an absolutely free interchange between all individuals who are subjects of the Crown—that is to say, that every subject of the King whoever he may be or wherever he may live has a natural right to travel or still more to settle in any part of the Empire—is a view which we fully admit, and I fully admit, as representing the India Office, to be one which cannot be maintained. As the Empire is constituted it is still impossible that we can have a free coming and going of all the subjects of the King throughout all parts of the Empire. Or to put the thing in another way, nobody can attempt to dispute the right of the self-governing Dominions to decide for themselves whom, in each case, they will admit as citizens of their respective Dominions.

That is one of the facts which on behalf of His Majesty's Government I fully recognise. I also recognise this—that we are or may be easily prone in this country to underrate the difficulties which confront the Dominions in this matter, because we are not troubled to any extent by a similar problem here. It so happens that there never has been any influx of coloured races into this country on a scale which has awakened any of the difficulties, which, as I well know, confront you gentlemen in the different self-governing Dominions. From one point of view, of course, it is an advantage to an Englishman, because he is able to take an impartial view, but at the same time it may lead him—as I indicated at first—not to attach sufficient weight to the very real and undoubted difficulties which you have to encounter in settling these questions.

As regards the whole question of Indian immigration, the Dominions feel, as I understand, two separate but at the same time closely interwoven objections to the influx of a large native population into their areas. In the first place such an influx may mean, and in practice often has meant, the rivalry of cheap labour. Now this is an entirely separate difficulty from the racial difficulty to which I shall allude

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in a moment; but it is, of course, a very real difficulty and it is accentuated by the abandonment which we now see on the part of many of some of the old theories of political economy. Many have now abandoned, for instance, the theory that labour can be regulated simply by the conditions of supply and demand. There are many nowadays, too, who have abandoned the theory that the remuneration of labour need necessarily stand in any very close relation to the value of the work done, and that being so, it is clear that the rivalry of cheap labour such as may be introduced from India seems a greater hardship than it did in the days of a harsher political economy which was generally accepted in Great Britain, and more or less all over the world, during the greater part of the nineteenth century. Now this labour objection would apply, and indeed in some parts of the world has applied, equally to the influx of any kind of labour depending on a lower standard of comfort whatever its colour may be, whether it be white or whether it be brown or black; and all over the world we are certainly approaching, if we have not already arrived at, the time when organised labour will seriously object to the importation of any kind of lower paid labour, whatever its colour and whatever its nationality if it is of a competitive character. This is one of the main difficulties, indeed, which is connected with this question of Indian immigration. It is quite separate from and ought not to be in any way confused with the question of what we call the colour bar. The two are often intermixed and sometimes I think objections which are really founded on one are made to rest upon the other. But as to the existence of the colour difficulty in its crudest form there can, of course, be no question whatever.

This question of colour affects individuals in this country, and I have no doubt the same applies to all the Dominions, in a very varying degree. Some people feel a natural sympathy and kindness towards the men of a coloured race. On the other hand other men, very often equally humane and with as high an ethical standard as the others, feel an instinctive distaste or even dislike to men of a different race. That is a matter which cannot be argued upon, but it is an undoubted fact, partly, I daresay, physiological as well as mental. Now certainly I am not at all disposed to underrate the objections of a certain kind which are felt by many to a close intercourse between the white and the coloured races. If we consider, for instance, the question of marriage, the question of intermarriage between races is one which is so far singular in its application to this subject that the disapproval of marriage of a white man with a native woman, and still more the marriage between a white woman and a man of a native race, affects superior people to the greatest extent. It is one of those prejudices or beliefs which becomes stronger as people become more educated and more generally superior, and in this respect it differs from most of the easy and foolish prejudices which are held against the native races. I am disposed to go so far as to say that in most respects the less a white man has individually to be proud of, the prouder he is apt to be of his whiteness, and the more he considers himself entitled to look down upon people of a coloured race. So far as my travels about the world, which have not been inconsiderable, have led me to suppose, I should certainly go so far as to say that there is no man who is more convinced of his superiority to the members of the native races, however cultured or however superior in other respects they may be, than the mere bar-loafer whose mental horizon is habitually clouded by whisky.

Now there is no doubt, I think, that our national British traits lead us into some temptation and difficulty in this matter. I remember hearing of a witty observation made many years ago, which was to the effect that a Frenchman begins by having a good opinion of himself, but an Englishman begins by having a bad opinion of other people. I do not know whether Sir Wilfrid, who knows both races so well, would be disposed in any way to confirm that statement; but that being so, if it is so, shows, I think, what our national temptations are when we come to consider the claims and the merits of people of a race entirely different from our own. What those claims and merits are are set out in the words which are quoted on the first page of this memorandum which has been circulated, among the observations made by Mr. Chamberlain in his address to the Conference in 1897. Those words are, if I may venture to say so, well worth weighing. I will not attempt to enlarge upon or in any way to develop what Mr. Chamberlain there so admirably said. I might,

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however, venture perhaps to remind you that, on the point of the national claims of Indians grounded on their past history—on their long descent—and other questions of the kind, this at any rate is not a moment when we desire to ignore those considerations. The ceremony of Thursday next, to which we are all looking forward, depends to a great extent for its meaning upon the long line of British sovereigns, through the Stuart, Tudor, and Plantagenet dynasties back to the time of the Norman Conquest and the dim ages of the Saxon Monarchy; and yet there are to be found in India those whose pride of descent is no less well founded and no less real than that of the King of England himself. Then, again, as regards history, we must never forget that not merely has India produced a great number of remarkable men both in the public service, and, to go back further, notable in ancient literature, but that she is most closely linked to a great number of the most famous men of our own race—statesmen, soldiers and others. Now, of course, these considerations do not appeal to everybody. We know very well there is a large number of persons to whom the particular appeal of history and tradition does not come home; but on the eve of the Coronation I can hardly help alluding to this particular aspect of the question. But when you pass on to personal qualities in order to decide whether a man possesses a claim for consideration, really I think the case for those who object to Indians as Indians is worse still. If “A man’s a man for a’ that” is to be our motto, the claim of a large number of Indians is a real and solid claim indeed. Whether we value intellectual culture, whether—apart from questions of creed—we value the religious mind, whether we value that remarkable devotion to and understanding of the things which are not seen which is so exceptionally deep in India and which, I think, appeals to many people in these harder and material days—whether, again, we value simple intellectual force, uncertain in its exercise in some directions I admit, but which in others produces as keen and fine an instrument as you can find in any part of the world—whether we value all of those things or any of them it is undoubtedly the fact that India and Indians can establish a high and real claim for our consideration, apart from all others.

I may again venture to remind the Conference, in spite of certain facts and certain difficulties which have arisen within the last few years, of the undoubted and signal loyalty of the Indian races as a whole to the British connection and especially to the British Crown. As things are, I fully admit that there is no short cut to the solution, so far as I know, in any part of the self-governing Dominions, of this question of Indian immigration by the adoption of heroic legislation—that I fully admit. But I do submit with confidence to the Conference that the relations between India and the rest of the Empire may be most materially improved by the cultivation of a mutual understanding. So far as the Indian standpoint is concerned, I quite admit that India must admit the main postulates with which I opened these observations, that is to say the undoubted liberty of the self-governing Dominions to lay down the rules of their own citizenship, and I can say cheerfully on behalf of the India Office and the Government of India that we will always do our best to explain to the people of India how the position stands in this matter. We will not encourage India in any way to develop what, as circumstances are, can only be called extravagant claims for entrance into the self-governing Dominions, and we will do our best to explain to them what the conditions of the Empire really are. In turn I think we are entitled and indeed it is our duty to ask the Ministers of the self-governing Dominions to spread within their own area in each case a realisation of how deep and how widespread feeling on this subject in India is. As I think the memorandum points out, the question is an almost unique one in this—that it combines all sections and shades of Indian opinion—all classes and all creeds and political schools—those who are most devoted to the British Crown, and those—few in number, as I hope and believe, but sometimes noisy and sometimes in their way even formidable—who desire to see the end of British rule in India—all these combine when it is a question of Indian disability in any part of the British Empire. It cannot be denied that this difficulty is a very real asset, and a valuable asset, in India to those who are opposed to our rule there. This is an aspect which I venture to impress strongly on

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the Conference. It puts into the hands of those—some of them entirely unscrupulous people—who object to our presence in India and who desire to undermine the Government a weapon which they are not slow to use in attacking us. If, they ask, Indians are to suffer from disabilities in various parts of the Empire, what good is the British connection at all? Of course, it is a question which can very easily be answered, at any rate to a great extent, but put in that form it naturally makes an appeal to people who are not well informed. I may point out also that the growing tendency to apply principles of self-government to India adds greatly to the complication and difficulty of the matter, because when a legislative council, as always possibly may happen, takes occasion to make a particular protest against some legislation or some administrative act on the part of the Government of a Dominion, it becomes—as I am sure you will all be disposed to agree—a far more serious matter than if a mere uninformed grumble, perhaps in the press or elsewhere, is heard. Therefore, the further we go towards developing the power of India to govern herself the greater are the difficulties which arise on this particular question.

What I should venture to state as the lines upon which the Dominion Governments might respectively proceed involve these two considerations. I think that it is possible for the Dominion Governments, strictly within the limits which they lay down for the admission of Indians, to make the entrance of Indians more easy and more pleasant than it has been in the past. It is a matter, I have no doubt, involving some personal trouble, but I am quite certain that if it could become known that, strictly within those limits which we all agree you are entitled to exercise, the Indian subjects of the Crown will receive a real welcome when they come and will not be looked upon with distrust or suspicion, much might be done to better the relations between India and the Dominions. On the other side, as regards the protection of those who are already domiciled there, some, I may remind you, have been there for a very long time indeed. There is at any rate one of the Dominions in which Orientals have been domiciled for some 200 years.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: That point is not raised in this resolution at all, Lord Crewe—the domicile of any of the Indians.

EARL OF CREWE: No, I was merely making a general statement; it is quite true, I am not speaking to the particular resolution, but it was asked that I should make a general statement also with regard to the treatment of domiciled Indians. You know very well the matters to which Indians who are in a Dominion attach special importance. In some cases, although not in all, they attach the highest importance to the maintenance of the obligations of caste, and I should hope, therefore, that so far as possible, particularly when Indians are unlucky enough to get into trouble and have to go to prison either for offences against the criminal law or on account of resistance to regulations having the force of law, so far as possible every effort will be made to consider the force of the caste prejudices and similar prejudices which Indians possess, and to make matters as easy for them as possible in that respect.

So far as my experience goes, Ministers have shown every desire in every case in which we have appealed to them on the subject to act not merely with humanity (I am speaking, of course, of the Dominion Ministers), but in a broad-minded spirit on these questions. The difficulty, of course, does not arise, I know very well, from the views or prejudices of Ministers themselves, but it cannot always be easy for them to impress upon their subordinates, quite subordinate officials who are probably imbued with a very strong anti-colour prejudice, the importance which we attach, and which those who have to do with India and know India always attach—to what may seem small matters of this kind. I am quite certain that I may venture to appeal to the Dominion Ministers to do all they can to inform public opinion rationally on the points that I have ventured to allude to in the earlier part of my remarks of the general claim of Indians—the members of another race—to considerate

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and friendly treatment as fellow-subjects and, as we hope in most cases, loyal subjects of the Crown. I think it cannot be disputed that until fairly pleasant terms exist between the self-governing Dominions and India, within, of course, I repeat once more, the necessary limitations which arise from the fact that you are self-governing Dominions, it cannot be denied that we are far from being a united Empire; however close the connection and however perfect the understanding between the Mother Country and the self-governing Dominions, we are not a united Empire unless that understanding spreads to some considerable extent also to that vast part of the Empire of which, of course, India is the most prominent division, but which also includes all the Crown Colonies which are inhabited by the various native races. We cannot be a united Empire for two reasons: in the first place, you cannot properly speak of a united Empire so long as acute and active difficulties exist between the different parts composing that Empire, and secondly—this, I am sure, will appeal to Ministers here—it is a distinct misfortune and a derogation from the unity of the Empire if the Mother Country continually finds itself implicated in difficulties between various parts of the Empire. I think it is one of the least agreeable functions which Mr. Harcourt and the members of the Government generally can have to fulfil, to be appealed to from one part of the Empire to another on matters of the kind which I have indicated; and it is for that reason that we should like to institute, if possible, a first-hand understanding between the Dominions and India—a direct understanding between your Governments and the Government of India—without the necessity for our acting either as advocates on the one side or the other, or being called in to give an opinion.

I think that is all I have to trouble you with. I have confined myself purposely to general propositions, because this is really a matter very much more of the spirit and attitude which you can take up than of an attempt to deal with the question by a series of legislative propositions. I do not pretend, as I repeat once more, that the question is really a soluble one in the full sense—I do not think it is, but I am quite certain that if the Dominions will agree all through to show an accommodating and friendly spirit towards India, although there will be, I have no doubt, plenty of unreasonable people in India as there are everywhere, yet at the same time the best public opinion in India will recognise your efforts and will endeavour to play its part in a peaceful solution of any difficulties as they may arise.

CHAIRMAN: As this arises on your resolution, Sir Joseph, perhaps you would like to speak now.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: I am sure we are all very much indebted to Lord Crewe for the very full and interesting statement he has made concerning the high Imperial position in the relationship of Great Britain and her Dependencies to that portion of the British Dominions known as the Indian Empire; and I want to say at once, to remove any misconception that may follow from a portion of the very lucid statement made by Lord Crewe, that so far as New Zealand is concerned we not only have no unfriendliness to the Indian Empire, but we regard it as a great portion of the British possessions that is invaluable to the British Empire, and to which we have the most loyal and friendly feeling as a part of the British possessions. Nor does the question, to my mind, arise in connection with this subject of whether the Oversea Dominions are troubled by an accession of people from India to our countries. As a matter of fact we are not troubled in that respect at all, and that aspect of the issue does not arise and, from my point of view, does not concern the very important matter that does deeply affect the Dominion of New Zealand and, I believe, the other Dominions too, in connection with the work in which some of the Indians are engaged in competition by British-owned ships against British-owned ships, where in the case of the oversea Dominions our ships are compelled by custom to employ white crews, and, moreover, they are compelled by law to conform to the conditions of pay, rates of hours, and all the other matters that are essential for the carrying on in a satisfactory way the business under the laws which, in the opinion of the people of New Zealand, should apply to seamen on board their ships.



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I listened to one part of Lord Crewe's speech with very considerable interest. On behalf of His Majesty's Government he recognises the undeniable right of the oversea Countries to decide for themselves whom they will admit as citizens of the Empire. I have already said, although I do not think that aspect of the matter comes up, though it is valuable to the whole of us to have the information Lord Crewe has delivered, in considering the difficult matter which has given rise to the notice of motion upon the Agenda paper submitted by me, that that is one of the things that we stand out so strongly for in New Zealand, and indirectly if the question of the admission of either Asiatics or Indians or any of the other coloured races to New Zealand does not come up under this proposition, it is fully provided for under our legislation and we deal with that quite independently of this question. If the condition of affairs which exists now is permitted to go on connected with our shipping there are only two alternatives for the people who own and control the fine steamship companies manned by white officers, white engineers, and white crews; they must either transfer the registration of their ships to places beyond the Oversea Dominions and follow the same course as other shipping companies of employing Lascars at low rates of wages to enable them to hold their trade in the Southern Seas where those oversea Dominions are, or they must get the Governments of the people in those countries, which in reality means the people, to alter the whole of our laws, which are of such extraordinary use to our country and of great value to the crews on board those ships, so as to relieve them from the conditions that the labour laws in the country require to be observed—the conditions of appeal to the Conciliation Arbitration Court in New Zealand which, when disputes arise, settle the wages and which must be followed by all whom it affects. The alternative to transferring the registration of these ships and giving them the right, as is the case now under the British law, of employing Lascars at low rates of pay, and then competing upon equal terms out in our seas for coastal trade or Inter-Colonial trade between New Zealand and Australia, or trade between New Zealand and the Islands—the alternative to the transfer of these ships from being owned and registered in our country and conforming to our laws there, would be to expect our countries to repeal laws which the people believe in, which are in the interest of the white crews on board those vessels, and thus force the rate of wages down to that which is paid to Lascars and Asiatics who come along in competition with the existing crews, and under existing conditions it is a most unfair competition.

Either of these propositions is unthinkable from our standpoint. First of all, why should an extraordinary and an indefensible penalty be imposed upon the enterprise of the people of a young country attached to Great Britain who, thirty or forty years ago or more, decided to have a thoroughly efficient mercantile marine owned in their own country and carrying on the work of that country both around its coasts and beyond its shores? Why should the people there, who have built up admittedly one of the finest steamship companies in the world, whose vessels are manned by white officers, white engineers, white firemen, and white crews—why, not on account of any unfriendly feeling towards the Indian Empire or the people in the Indian Empire, but because of the fact that for commercial reasons certain other steamship companies are employing lascars at a low rate of pay, and I am not disputing the right of those companies to carry on their work as they are doing, or saying that they have not got an absolute legal right to do so—should a country like ours (I am speaking for New Zealand only at the moment although I believe Australia is in exactly the same position) be placed in this difficult position because of the action by a great and powerful British steamship company plying from England across the seas to the Australian coast and on to New Zealand with a large number of lascars employed on them? Why should the whole of the industrial life of thousands of people employed on board our ships not only be jeopardised but menaced with the destruction of the whole system as it stands under the existing conditions? To that I for one am anxious to do all in my power to prevent. I am always ready to spread throughout our country, if the necessity should arise to do it—and I say again there is no feeling against the Indian Empire or the Indians as a portion of the British people—the doctrines suggested by Lord Crewe to