

Mr. C. TODD (S.A.): We all know that the only *modus vivendi* in this world is compromise. May I suggest that 2 o'clock should be the time? It must be borne in mind that we are having faster steamers and providing for a faster service, and it is only the slow boats that reach Albany too late for the train. Fast boats leaving Adelaide at 2 o'clock on Thursday will arrive there in ample time on Sunday afternoon. We stipulate 72 hours.

Mr. R. A. SHOLL (W.A.): I have quoted the fastest steamer of the P. and O. Company, the "Britannia." She is one of the few that can do it.

Mr. C. TODD (S.A.): I move as an amendment that the time be 2 o'clock.

Amendment put and negatived; and original question put and passed.

*Conference with Imperial Government.*

The recommendation that—

"It is necessary that early steps be taken to confer with the Imperial Government on the subject of the new contracts, in order that tenders may be invited with as little delay as possible"—

Put and passed.

3. FUMIGATION OF MAILS AT FIRST AUSTRALIAN PORT AT JOINT EXPENSE.

On the recommendation—

"We are of opinion that any fumigation of mails should be at Adelaide, and not at Albany, the first port of arrival. If a thorough fumigation is considered advisable, it would be necessary to open the 700 or 800 bags, containing about 250,000 articles, arriving by each steamer, to untie the bundles, and fumigate each article. It is hardly needful, however, to point out that such a course as this would probably delay the mails forty-eight hours, to say nothing of the large expense in providing a staff for opening, retying, and reclosing the mails, the beneficial results, as a preventative, being, as we understand, in the opinion of many medical officers, very doubtful"—

The PRESIDENT said: I may say that this matter has been placed upon the business paper by myself, and I may add that I have not much faith in the system of fumigation. I do not think it accomplishes what we really desire; but, on the other hand, the medical men, to whose opinions we must bow—at all events, the medical men in Queensland—instruct us to have the mails fumigated from any infected port. Of course, we are bound to carry out those recommendations, but at the same time it appears to me that if we are to carry out instructions and to fumigate the mails, we should not carry those mails all over the continent from Adelaide to Queensland and distribute the germs of disease through the railway trains of the different colonies. We must adopt a means of fumigating them at the first port of arrival, and I agree with that portion of the report which names Adelaide. There is no use fumigating at Albany, and I think some means should be adopted of fumigating mails arriving by British-India steamers at Thursday Island. It seems to me that the proposal made is a good one, although, looking at the report which the heads of departments have submitted to us, they have pointed out so many difficulties, that I am inclined to believe they are not very favourable to the project themselves. At the same time, if we admit that the germs of disease can be possibly carried by the mails, then I think you must admit that we ought to put a stop to the possibility of contagion being carried amongst us by dealing with the mails at the first port of arrival. We will then accomplish what we are told will be the means of preventing the spread of contagious disease. Members of the committee have pointed out how many thousands of articles will have to be dealt with. But have not all these articles to be dealt with piece-meal? Every colony will get a few hundred bags, and I think we should be adopting a wise course, if we believe in fumigation at all, in dealing with the matter at the first port of call.

The Hon. A. WYNNE (V.): Will all the bags have to be opened?

The PRESIDENT: The doctors say it is no use unless they are.

The Hon. J. G. WARD (N.Z.): Briefly, my opinion is that it is not desirable that the whole of the mails should be opened at any one place. It is indicated in the report submitted to us that it will cause a delay of forty-eight hours, which is a matter of considerable consequence to people who expect letters as soon as possible after their arrival in the colonies. On one hand we are providing for a large sum of money to subsidise steamers in order to obtain a greater speed, and on the other we are providing for a system which immediately delays matters forty-eight hours. I do not know what the medical officers' opinions are, but I have an idea that if the bags are fumigated it would be sufficient. It seems to me that we are now establishing a very important departure, and one which, while there has been a great deal said by those who are afraid of disease being imported, I certainly think is not a very wise step. If the bags are fumigated at the first landing port, the contents could be fumigated when they have reached their several destinations.

The PRESIDENT: The germs would be carried all over the colonies first.

The Hon. J. G. WARD: All reasonable precautions would be taken by fumigating the bags first and the mails afterwards.

Mr. C. TODD (S.A.): It will be observed that the heads of departments make no recommendation beyond that it is necessary to fumigate the mails thoroughly. All medical men say that if fumigation is to be carried out at all the bags must be emptied, and the contents spread out so that the fumes may reach every article. Therefore, I think there is no alternative but to carry out the suggestion. If the fumigation of the bags would make it safe to carry them in trains, and let each colony deal with its own

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