

compete. That appears, so far as we know, quite improbable at the present time, therefore we are compelled—especially in view of the strong wish of the London Post Office to this effect—to agree to the proposal laid down by the London office. I should think, Sir, considering that we have now two years more to run with the mail companies connected with the Federal Mail Contract, that the London Post Office will, before the termination of the existing contract, use their influence in getting from the mail companies some of the conditions agreed upon at the Wellington Conference. I can only therefore move, Mr President,—

“That this Conference desires to express its disappointment at the reply of the London Post Office to the conditions laid down by the Colonies for an extension of the Federal Mail Contract, and while, under the circumstances, reluctantly agreeing to such extension, desires to emphasise the terms and conditions of the Wellington Conference. This Conference further desires to inform the London Office that no future Contract will be acceptable to the Colonies which does not include them, together with the resolution passed by this Conference relating to the employment of coloured labour.”

I can, Sir, only move this resolution, and reiterate the hope I have already expressed, that the London Post Office will exert itself to the utmost to try to secure some of the important conditions laid down by the Wellington Conference. For instance, there is the condition relating to frozen meat, butter, fruit, &c. The stipulation of cool storage on our mail boats has not been mentioned by the London Office, and this I take it, Sir, has an important bearing on the subject, in view of the fact that the Australian Colonies are trying to recover themselves to a certain extent by the exportation of perishable products. The London Office says nothing of that either in their telegrams or in their promise to write hereafter. They leave it out altogether. They also leave out the last condition agreed to by the Wellington Conference as to the employment of coloured labour on mail steamers. Some of these things, such as the exportation of frozen meat, butter, and fruit, &c., it would seem are proposed to be left out of sight altogether. They neither give us the concessions, nor write to us about them. Altogether the reply from the London Office is not of a very satisfactory character. I accordingly beg to move the resolution which I have just read to the Conference.

**Dr COCKBURN** I beg to second the resolution, which I do somewhat reluctantly. I should certainly have liked to have seen the stipulations met in a more liberal spirit. I cannot but bear in mind the fact that the Post Office authorities have definitely refused on more than one occasion to call for any tenders which would extend the term of the contract for the Australian mails beyond the termination of the present contracts which have been made by the London Post Office authorities for the India and China mails. Of course that throws us into the alternative of either doing as proposed by this resolution, or to insist upon fresh tenders being called for a short term. To adopt the latter alternative might involve us in difficulties. It cannot be expected that other steam companies will come in and tender for only two years, as they would have to provide a large fleet of steamers to carry out the service. I think, Sir, the chances are if we called for tenders for the ensuing two years, we would in the end be glad to get back to the present system. The question of cool storage is an important one to the Colonies, as the quantity of perishable products now exported is a large item of revenue; but it must be borne in mind that the Colonies interested in the mail contracts and having agreements with the mail companies can at two months' notice get from the companies the cool storage accommodation they require, and they have entered into arrangements to supply extra vessels to carry on this trade. With regard to the resolution which has already been confirmed by this Conference in reference to the employment of coloured labour, the most sanguine cannot expect anything to be done in this direction for some little time. It will take, no doubt, some time for the necessary arrangements to be made. We have no other course but to fall in somewhat reluctantly with the desire of our senior partner in this respect—the United Kingdom—which not only acts for us, but also calls for tenders and bears the larger portion of the subsidy. I therefore beg to second the resolution.

**The Hon. P O FYSH:** I must, Mr. President, support the resolution in its entirety, except upon one point. I do not wish to have any reservation in my own mind as to which I am not disposed to give utterance publicly. I will say, firstly, I think the time is coming when the cost of the subsidies to the mail steamers will cease, but if not ceasing, yet the cost shall be more equitably divided in the future between our senior partner and ourselves. No one appears desirous at this Conference of re-opening the question of the subsidised amounts of Tasmania in contradistinction to other Australasian Colonies and our senior partner, the United Kingdom. If we consider the enormous amount of business transacted by these Colonies for the mother country, it must be apparent that the division of the cost, £170,000, which is the present subsidy paid, has not been equitably made when the Imperial Post Office takes only £95,000 out of the £170,000, giving £75,000 as the share of the Colonies. I have no later statistics than 1889 as to the mail matter carried. If I had an opportunity of gathering information later my statement would be considerably emphasised in that every year the quantity of mail matter carried from England for these Colonies far exceeds the growth of mail matter carried from the Colonies to England. That would be apparent from the fact that while in one year there were 35 tons of letters carried, there were 500 tons of mail matter in addition to letters. The great tonnage of matter which leaves Australian waters for England would be newspaper matter, and therefore the quantity of tonnage they have to deliver for us is very small in the item of book and parcel post; but