

shipping? We would have to do that if we wanted to be fair to the shipping interests, because it could be hardly expected that a mind trained in railroad matters would be equally trained in shipping matters.

The protests I have received come from various large commercial and industrial houses of the west. One is from the British Columbia Cement Company. I do not propose to read the telegrams; they are too numerous for that, so I will just name the companies concerned. I have a telegram from the Moore Whittington Lumber Company; another from the Cameron Lumber Company; another from J. H. Todd and Sons Limited, and one from one of the very largest wholesale hardware houses in the west, Messrs. McLennan, McFeely and Prior. In addition I also received a protest from the Vancouver Merchants Exchange, which the minister mentioned.

In these times of business depression, when business men are straining to the utmost to carry on their activities, will it be of any value to us as a nation to bring in legislation which may make it even more difficult for them to carry on? Take the case of a hardware firm, such as the company that sent me a telegram. They receive large consignments from the east. Should they be put at the mercy of the railways if they can bring in larger and more varied supplies by sea? Would it be fair to them to take away the competition of water traffic? When I mention competition I must say that there would be the danger of the railway commissioners being influenced to a certain extent by their association with the railways. Both the railway companies have shipping interests as well, and they might so arrange matters as to have vessels at the ports just at the right time to take the freight, and the independent shippers would be placed in a precarious position if they were unable to compete for freight being handled by the railway companies. We had a merchant marine service owned and controlled by the government, and surely those ships were in a position to give good service at as reasonable a rate as possible, but what happened? The government had to dispose of many of those vessels because they could not be made to pay. Even the United States have found it difficult to build up a paying merchant marine, and many of their ocean liners are subsidized to a certain extent. So I say, Mr. Speaker, that the day we try to have this business handled from the railway commission point of view will be disastrous to us. It will mean more regulations, more examinations and more supervision; it will mean another commission

[Mr. Plunkett.]

set up, because surely both railways and shipping could not be put under one commission. With the trade of the country just beginning to pick up I think it would be unwise to make this change, particularly when we have substantial proof of the disapproval of the business men who use this service. I cannot see any reason why we should support this measure, and I intend to oppose it.

Hon. P. J. VENIOT (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, generally I like to agree with the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Neill), who at various times has made useful and practical suggestions to this house, but so far as this bill is concerned I feel constrained to oppose it. If this measure passes and becomes law there will be a conflict of authority between the railway commission and the government of the province of New Brunswick. In that province we have what is known as a ferry service, with boats carrying both passengers and freight from the islands to the mainland. This service serves three islands in the bay of Fundy and two or three islands in the bay of Chaleur. In the county I have the honour to represent there are two islands served by this ferry service. In the past the federal government granted a subsidy to the ferry system of Gloucester county. For the last year or two that subsidy has been withdrawn, but the provincial government has continued to subsidize the ferry system of the province, and under that arrangement it has authority to fix passenger and freight rates. If this bill goes through that authority will be taken from the provincial government and vested in the railway commission. I claim that unless it goes to a very great deal of trouble the railway commission will not be in a position to regulate freight and passenger rates in connection with our ferry system as efficiently as the government of that province can at the present time, and for that reason I regret that I must oppose the passage of this measure.

Mr. A. W. NEILL (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I was more than astonished when, about a minute and a half before the notice was called, I was informed that it was the intention of the Minister of Railways (Mr. Manion) to go on with this bill to-night. I had allowed the bill to stand previously at his request, and I thought perhaps there might be such a thing as reciprocity in these matters. With regard to the criticism that has been advanced by the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Veniot), that is entirely a local matter which could have been adjusted in the railway commission if the bill had been allowed to go