

*Ocean Shipping Rates*

Mr. SPEAKMAN: I am very glad indeed to receive the Prime Minister's promise, and I appreciate it the more in the light of certain evidence which was placed before this House by the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Low) in discussing the costs of transportation incurred by vessels of the type proposed by Sir William Petersen, and in stating what profits were to be expected under existing rates—because I wish to point out to hon. gentlemen on my right that when they discuss the enormous profits to be made by the Petersen Company under the contract they neglect to take into account that the profit of £3,000 per voyage is based on existing rates, the very rates that must be lowered when the agreement comes into effect—in stating those profits the minister quoted a letter from Mr. R. B. Teakle, apparently an expert connected with the Canadian Government Merchant Marine, endorsing Sir William Petersen's statements as to costs. I would point out that Mr. Teakle was careful to observe that as to wages to be paid the crew, insurance on the vessels, and the manner in which redemption and depreciation are to be taken care of, and also the oil consumption, he could not check these points without going so closely into the proposition as might necessitate inquiries to be made, but he had no reason to think that the figures were materially out of line; and that also as Sir William Petersen had furnished no plan of the proposed vessels he had had to work on the general details given by that gentleman. In other words, he was not able to verify the four main items of expenditure and the specifications of the ships. So it seems to me that this endorsement is worth about as much as the paper it is written on.

Mr. LOW: But he also said that he did not doubt the figures of Sir William at all.

Mr. SPEAKMAN: He also stated that as far as accurate knowledge went he was dependent upon the statement issued by Sir William Petersen himself. That is one reason why I certainly would be glad to see Sir William Petersen appear before the committee to verify the statements and figures furnished to Mr. Teakle.

I think, Mr. Speaker, I have taken up sufficient time of the House. My few remarks have not been in vain, as now we understand perhaps better than we did before the attitude of the government and what its policy is in this case.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Could the hon. member define it in his own words?

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

Mr. SPEAKMAN: For the present I shall defer my judgment on the amendment because I have not yet had time to consider it. On the resolution itself I shall also defer my judgment, because I wish to make it absolutely clear that no matter what method is adopted of bringing this subject before the committee, no vote of mine shall be interpreted as committing me to support this method of dealing with the situation. I base that statement upon the Prime Minister's explanation of the circumstances of the case. Further, I would state that in voting for this I am voting in accordance with the expressed intentions of the government to reduce or control ocean transportation rates, nothing more and nothing less, and when any method comes before this House for final ratification I shall deem myself free to vote in support of or against it as at the time my judgment shall dictate when in possession of all the facts.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Hear, hear.

Hon. W. R. MOTHERWELL (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, although this debate has only continued into the evening of the second day, it has cleared the air considerably compared with the first day. On that occasion the official opposition had grave misgivings as to whether there was any grievance at all in respect of ocean freight rates. The hon. member for Vancouver Centre (Mr. Stevens) intimated that if there was a combine it was a very harmless one, it was not vicious at all, it was somewhat domesticated and tame. The hon. member for Centre Toronto (Mr. Bristol) had very much doubt whether there was anything wrong at all or not, so far as I could gather from his remarks. To-night the government believes, as it did then, that there is a combine, a vicious combine, and that the way to remedy it is embodied in this resolution and bill. The official opposition also think there is a difficulty or they would not have moved their amendment. They believe there is a difficulty, but they think it can be removed in the way set out in their amendment. The last speaker, I think, is equally satisfied that there is a combine and an objectionable one. While I was just wondering at the beginning how he proposed to remedy it, I noticed before he got through that he was not satisfied with the amendment; therefore I assume that with certain reservations he is prepared to support some such form of remedy as is proposed by the government so long as he gets results. Well now, you cannot tell that until we get