

*Ocean Shipping Rates*

been adduced, and until the committee reports to parliament, I am content to suspend final judgment in the matter.

Mr. SUTHERLAND: The hon. member no doubt realizes that he has not answered my question. Why did the government not take action last session to carry out the recommendation of the committee a year before, that a similar committee should be appointed the following session, that is, last year? Why did they not do something last year if conditions were so bad as to call for a remedy?

Mr. DUFF: I agree that to a certain extent it might have been possible for the government to take some quicker action. But there is this much to its credit, that this government is taking action now, which is something that the late government failed to do. The late government knew all about the situation. Sir Wilfrid Laurier had moved a resolution at the Imperial conference, prior to the defeat of his government in 1911, to have the whole matter investigated and he appointed a commissioner in the person of the Hon. Mr. Larkin. After the Laurier government was defeated Sir Robert Borden appointed another commissioner, and from that time on until 1921 the matter was under consideration but no action was taken either by the Conservative government, or by the Union government, or by the Liberal-Conservative government led by my good friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. Meighen). But this government is doing something; it is making an attempt to solve the problem. Whether the present proposal is all that could be done, or even whether it is the right thing to do, I am not quite sure. But the government should be given credit for its sincerity and its honesty of purpose in endeavouring to grapple with the situation which is complained of and which has been brought to its attention by the shippers of the country.

Mr. SUTHERLAND: I do not wish to interrupt my hon. friend, but why stress the importance of the evidence taken before this special committee when you ignore the recommendation in their final report that, owing to the impossibility of doing justice to the evidence, a similar committee should be appointed at the next session, which recommendation was absolutely ignored by the government. Yet the contradictory evidence submitted to that committee is being constantly referred to in the course of this debate.

Mr. DUFF: Mr. Speaker, I do not think I can say anything more to my hon. friend; I have endeavoured to cover his question.

[Mr. Duff.]

Mr. MEIGHEN: Before the hon. gentleman proceeds: Assuming I am right as to what he really thinks of the Petersen contract, judging from his speech, does he consider that this House is taking a right course in voting for anything at all providing it goes to a committee afterwards?

Mr. DUFF: I would refer my right hon. friend to something which happened in this House last year when a bill was introduced. I objected to the principle of it, I objected to the second reading; the bill went to a committee; the committee made some changes, but not so many as I think they would have made had they known what has since happened; that committee reported the bill to the House; and the House voted against the report of the committee which they themselves had appointed. Now, that may happen in this case, although I do not say it will or should.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The hon. gentleman did not believe in the bill he is referring to, and he opposed it. He does not think now that he was wrong, does he? And if he was right then, why does he not follow the same course now?

Mr. DUFF: Time has proven conclusively that I was right, and I am sure my right hon. friend feels in his heart that he was wrong in the way he registered his vote last session.

Mr. MEIGHEN: That is another question.

Mr. DUFF: With regard to this matter, I certainly do not want anybody to think or say that I am opposed to the contract. I think it is a step in the right direction.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I think you are.

Mr. DUFF: Again, time will tell.

Mr. IRVINE: I understood the hon. member to say in reply to a question that he did not anticipate that the ten ships proposed to be built would have any effect upon the combine. Does he not think that the million and a quarter of the people's money to be spent by the government to prove its good intentions is a little too much money to spend on such propaganda?

Mr. DUFF: I did not say what the hon. gentleman says I did say.

Mr. IRVINE: That is correct.

Mr. DUFF: Not at all. I said that although we may differ with regard to the remedy proposed, we certainly should give the government credit for attempting to cope with this grave situation. I think that in the opinion of people who are vitally interested