

and have given contracts for 600 vessels. That is a record which puts this Government, which has done nothing in the direction of shipbuilding, in a position they ought to feel. In the past this Government has neglected their duty to the country, but even at this late day they ought to be encouraged to make a different course and engage without delay in the building of a reasonable number of ships in order to meet so far as possible the requirements of our country and of the Empire.

Mr. CURRIE: I have no desire to delay this item, but having some interest in the matter, it might be well for me to place certain facts before the Committee. A great deal of the time of the House this afternoon was spent in discussing the impossible. Hon. gentlemen opposite have been scolding the Government, and denouncing the Minister of Railways and everybody generally, because the Government has not taken up the question of shipbuilding, especially of steel shipbuilding. When the war broke out, there was very little business to be had by any of the shipbuilding firms. As a matter of fact, in 1915, there was no business. The only people who were building any ships were the Standard Oil Company, and they were getting them so cheaply, and had such foresight, that they gave certain contracts to some of the yards, at low prices. Since the submarine policy of the Germans has succeeded in destroying a large number of vessels, and freight tonnage has gone up on the Atlantic, shipbuilding in Canada has had a great boom. A steel ship that could have been bought for \$40,000 in 1915 will easily sell to-day for \$350,000. I am now speaking of second-hand twenty-year old ships. At the present moment there is not a steel shipbuilding yard in eastern Canada, that is, Collingwood, Kingston, Toronto, Montreal, or Levis, that would take a contract to build a ship inside of two years, because they are filled up with orders at remunerative prices for that time, and even longer. I know this to be a fact. If you want to build a ship, where are you going to get the material? There is absolutely no material available inside of two years. We cannot bring plate from Europe, and all the plate the American mills can produce for the next two years is sold or booked. The price of plate has gone up as high as \$160 to \$175 a ton, whereas before the war and during 1915 it could be purchased as low as \$34 a ton. From this it will be apparent that the cost of shipbuilding has gone up enormously—over \$100 a ton for the steel for the hulls

alone. My hon. friend says you can get it for \$80 a ton. Why, the added cost alone is over \$100 a ton. A ship of 2,500 tons burden will take, roughly, about a similar quantity of structural steel and plate. The plate mill which was at Sydney was sold to the United States since the war began, exported out of Canada, and I understand is now employed making plate in the United States. At the time this mill was purchased it was impossible to sell any plate in Canada, and there was no work whatever for it to do. At the present time every plate mill in America is employed. Every pound of steel that can be got to a plate mill is sent there, because of the high price of plates. If a man were prepared to-morrow to supply the structural steel and plates for a ship, or two ships, or ten ships, he would not be one day with his books unfiled. The question then arises, what is the next best policy? They have a board in the United States, to which my hon. friend has referred, which was established with the idea of building ships for the United States Government. The first board was divided in its views as to whether the ships should be built of steel or of wood. Two of the members resigned because they held the view that some of the ships should be built of wood, whereas the president of the board would not agree to this view. The result was that the commission delayed action and was dismissed, and another appointed, and a certain number of wooden ships are to be built. If any one wants a ship built in this country inside of a year or so there is only one way to get it built, and that is to have it built of wood. There is only one place in Canada that I know of where there is plenty of cheap wood to be had, that is in British Columbia, so that the Government, in adopting the idea of building the ships could not do anything but have the ships built in British Columbia. Hon. gentlemen have stated it would be wrong to build wooden ships when you can build steel ships. I agree with that. But if you cannot build iron ships, and you want ships, you must take what you can get—the wooden ones. The tonnage of the world has been reduced to such an extent that I think the Government has been very modest, indeed, in placing orders for only two ships. I think they would have been amply justified in giving contracts for at least ten more of these wooden ships of, say, 2,500 tons burden, to assist in the carrying of freight from this country to Great Britain, as well