

They feel it is a dishonourable thing for a government to appoint, in an official way, a representative who pretends to go into the matter and gather evidence, from the very companies affected, when on the facts submitted it appears he did not do any such thing. They have a reason to object, whether their interests are materially affected or not. I would suggest that a provision which I shall give should be added to subsection (d) of clause 1. The present clause reads:

That the control and regulation of the rates to be charged by the contractor shall rest with the government of Canada and that the government shall fix such transportation rates on all commodities from time to time.

I suggest that there be added these words:

But such rates shall be made with due regard to rates on similar classes of goods, products or commodities between the province of British Columbia or other western provinces of Canada and Great Britain or Ireland or the continent of Europe, so that there shall not be any unfair discrimination of rates as against goods, products or commodities between British Columbia via the Panama canal or other ocean route and the said western provinces of Canada on the one part and Great Britain or Ireland or the continent of Europe on the other part.

I would refer the government also to a provision in the agreement which makes it possible, at the option of Sir William Petersen to put on any number of ships that he likes and then to call on the government to pay the money. This point was referred to before, but I want to refer to it again. That is contained in clause 3 which states:

And the subsidy aforementioned shall be increased or reduced as the case may be in proportion to the number of ships operated and maintained by the contractor in the service aforesaid from time to time and such increase or reduction of subsidy shall be added to or deducted from the monthly payments hereinbefore provided for in paragraph two.

Therefore, if Sir William Petersen gets the idea that he wants to put on twenty ships instead of ten, he is able to ask the government to give him \$2,700,000 instead of \$1,350,000 a year, and instead of making \$600,000 for himself, as he can,—and as to this the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Low) refused to answer or to give any explanation—make \$1,200,000. It was said the other day that clause 6 provided a remedy in the hands of the minister. Clause 6, I submit, merely gives the minister power to act if Sir William Petersen does not act. It is an option in favour of the minister, by which the minister may say: In my judgment that trade requires more boats; therefore I give you three months' notice, and—

The contractor shall arrange to place additional ships up to the number of ten in this service on an increase in subsidy in proportion to the number of ships actually placed in service.

No one can deny that there is at least a possibility of a double interpretation, to put the case mildly and in the most favourable aspect to the government. Clause 9 states:

And the contractor covenants and agrees that the vessels in the said service shall prosecute all voyages made by them with all possible speed and despatch.

I submit that the minister should have some power to fix the dates and ports of sailings in order to meet the needs of the trade. The whole thing is in the hands of Sir William Petersen. He can fix the dates of sailings to suit himself. Clause 10 states:

The minister shall have the privilege at his option of entering into contracts for like purposes with any other contractor or contractors.

For my part, I would object to any government, whether Liberal or Conservative or any other kind, giving to a minister unlimited and full power to make contracts with sundry people unknown to parliament for any number of ships and on the basis upon which they might agree. It was said the other day that parliament would have to vote the money. That may be so before the money is paid, but the contract is binding upon the Parliament of Canada just as a contract would be upon an individual once it is signed. This contract gives to the minister full power to make whatever contract he likes and on whatever basis he may determine.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest to the minister that when he revises this contract, as he is going to do, because the Prime Minister said so, he should read the contract made between Sir William Petersen and the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1897. This contract will be found at page 3977 of Hansard of June 14, 1897. There are in that contract provisions which are so palpably and clearly in the interest of the people of Canada that it is beyond me to understand why the government has left them out of this contract, unless it has done so for some purpose beneficial to Sir William Petersen as regards which the people of Canada might be suspicious. I will refer the House to some of those provisions. This afternoon, we had a little discussion back and forth with the hon. member for Lunenburg (Mr. Duff) in regard to these vessels having to travel between Canada and Great Britain. In the contract of 1897, almost the same words are used. The contract reads that the contractor is:

To build, equip, provide, establish, and during this contract to continue and in the manner hereinafter mentioned, a regular steamship service between the port of Liverpool and the Canadian ports hereinafter named.

The ports were specified. Yet they took precaution to insert another clause in these words: