

under the contract can make any arrangement with the contractor to put on other freight boats or passenger boats or boats to carry mail.

Mr. MEIGHEN: But the contractor has to agree to the new terms. The terms may call for a large amount of money, and he does not need to agree if he does not want to.

Mr. DUFF: I cannot answer all these questions. I am not in the confidence of Sir William Petersen or the Minister of Trade and Commerce. I am taking the contract as I read it, and in view of all the questions that have been asked, and all that has been said in regard to the contract, it seems to me that the only right and proper thing to do in order to get sufficient and proper information is to allow this resolution to go to a special committee, let this special committee summon witnesses, examine Sir William Petersen, summon the government officials and summon men from the steamship lines. In that way the committee will be able to decide whether the government is justified in asking parliament to ratify this contract or not.

Mr. LADNER: Does the hon. member not think that should have been done before the contract was made and the government committed to this matter?

Mr. MEIGHEN: Hear, hear.

Mr. DUFF: I am afraid I cannot follow the hon. gentleman. The government must have a policy. They do not come into parliament and wait for a committee to investigate the matter before they bring down a policy.

Mr. LADNER: They have done it before in regard to freight rates.

Mr. DUFF: When?

Mr. LADNER: In 1922, in connection with the Crownsnest pass agreement. When the committee reported then they adopted the policy.

Mr. DUFF: Then they have received sufficient information from this agricultural committee and this is the policy which they think is right and proper.

Mr. LADNER: I am not trying to argue with the hon. member. I am impressed with the soundness of his argument and his information; and in view of his suggestion that the matter should go to a committee, where the information could be obtained, and submitted to parliament, I am merely asking his

opinion, which would be of value to me and other members, as to whether he does not think it would be wiser that the committee should inquire and obtain the information before the government commits itself to the agreement.

Mr. DUFF: I do not think so. I have read letters from prominent manufacturers, and I showed that it was not a new thing. The government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier dealt with it in 1911. The government of Sir Robert Borden started to deal with it, but for some reason, perhaps because of the war, they did not get around to it. This question has been before the people of this country for many years. No less a personage than the hon. member for West York (Sir Henry Drayton) was sent to London to make an investigation. He made a splendid investigation, and he came to the conclusion that something was wrong that needed to be rectified. But because of the war and for other reasons, nothing was done by the government of either Sir Wilfrid Laurier or Sir Robert Borden. This government, however, which is a courageous government, has investigated the matter, and after hearing the evidence placed before the agricultural committee, it has laid this proposition before the House. It seems to me that we should certainly be willing to pass this resolution and let it go to the committee. After the committee investigates the matter and reports to parliament, and after we have an opportunity of reading all the evidence, if we are not satisfied, then it is time enough for us to object to any of the clauses in the agreement or in the bill based upon it. The steamship companies have nothing to fear from this government, and I do not think it is wise for them, in their pamphlet, to refer to the fact that, as I said a moment ago, this subsidy was granted. They are taking a rather peculiar attitude, which reminds me of the ditty which says:

The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be;  
The devil was well, the devil a monk was he.

That seems to be the way the steamship companies are looking at this proposition. When they and the railway companies could get subsidies, that was all right; but when this government in order to reduce freight rates wishes to give another company a subsidy, they object to the subsidy being paid. I think, under all the circumstances, this government is perfectly justified, in order to get the rates reduced if they are excessive, to give a subsidy to this steamship company, especially in view of the fact that the government has full power to reduce rates.