

have been an increase of some twenty-five per cent. It is said that the shipping rates are governed by the law of supply and demand. Be that as it may, everyone knows that at that time there was far more shipping available in the country than there were cargoes to be carried; so that I cannot possibly see why the conference should have raised the rates twenty-five per cent.

Mr. CHAPLIN: A moment ago the hon. member was quoting from a letter written by a shipper in which the statement was made that the rates quoted by the Canadian Government Merchant Marine were higher than those charged by Messrs. Pickford & Black. But the hon. gentleman also told us, of his own knowledge, that Pickford & Black and the Canadian merchant marine were "in cahoots" as regards rates and were quoting the same figures.

Mr. DUFF: I did not say that; I said the Canadian Government Merchant Marine and the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. These goods to which reference is made in the letter I have quoted were shipped evidently from Montreal. The rates quoted by the Canadian Merchant Marine were charged on cargoes from Montreal direct to the West Indies, and the shipper could afford to pay the railway freight from Montreal to Halifax and ship from that port by one of the boats of Messrs. Pickford & Black and still save on the shipment; the rate all-told was so much lower than the rate quoted by the agent of the Canadian Government Merchant Marine in Montreal. The hon. member will see the point without my going any further.

Mr. LEWIS: As an experienced vessel owner, will the hon. member give us his opinion as to what effect the operation of the ten vessels now proposed will be as against the alleged combine?

Mr. DUFF: That is a large order.

Mr. LEWIS: I ask the hon. member that question because I know he is experienced in this regard.

Mr. DUFF: Well, the operation of ten ships may not have the desired effect, but at least it will show the people of the country that this government is anxious and determined to do what it can to break up this so-called combine, if it exists. They may not succeed, of course, for one reason and another which will appeal to my hon. friend. If I owned or controlled one of these great shipping lines I would try to get the rest of my friends to co-operate with me in an endeavour to drive the Petersen concern out of business

altogether. There are a number of ways that might be adopted to frustrate the scheme. I say, however, that the government is justified in endeavouring to do something to bring down rates, if they are too high, and to show the people of the country that it is standing by them and will make every effort possible to reduce the cost of carriage on the Atlantic.

Mr. LEWIS: In case the committee comes to the conclusion that the rates are not too high under present circumstances, will the hon. gentleman still support this legislation?

Mr. DUFF: I want to hear the evidence first. But after reading through the evidence given before the agricultural committee two years ago I expect to see my hon. friend from Swift Current (Mr. Lewis) support the action of the government in this matter.

Mr. SUTHERLAND: The hon. member has referred to the desire of the government to do something practical in this matter. If he will look up the seventh report of the committee that sat two years ago he will find that they pointed out that owing to the wide range of subjects submitted to them they were not able to give this whole matter the consideration which it merited. They therefore recommended to the government that a similar committee should be appointed subsequently, which would have been last session. Why did not the government carry out the recommendations of that committee if they attached so much value to the evidence then taken?

Mr. DUFF: I cannot, of course, answer for the government, but it seems to me that even apart from the findings of that committee there is enough evidence on the files of the different departments, particularly of the Department of Trade and Commerce, to warrant the government in taking the step now proposed. I have not wearied the House by reading all the letters that could be submitted on this subject, but I could quote letter after letter from prominent manufacturers throughout the country in different lines of business, complaining bitterly that the rates are altogether too high. As I said before, however, I am not going to say whether the rates are too high or not; I believe in giving a square deal to the steamship companies. The steamship companies deserve a great deal of credit for the service they have put on not only on the north Atlantic but on every sea, and I am willing to wait until the proposed committee has met and taken evidence before I pass any judgment on the question of rates. Until that evidence has