

the contract to the committee. That is the custom; the second reading is had and then amendments are suggested. And very often owing to the number of amendments that are introduced bills have to be reprinted. But as the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) has indicated, whatever alterations are made must be such as both parties can agree to; otherwise there is no contract. We are following in this case the method that is pursued in connection with any other bill. The friends of the combine have instilled into the minds of some people the idea that an attempt is being made to do something underhand. That is absolutely not so; our desire is to have everybody on the face of the earth who wants to be heard given an opportunity to come before the committee. There is no juggling whatever; everything is absolutely straight and above board. But it is a strange fact, Mr. Speaker, that the most straightforward people are sometimes the most suspected.

I think I have dealt with most of the remarks of one kind and another that have been made by those who have attacked the agreement. And those attacks were very feeble indeed. Most of the criticism has been directed against Mr. Preston. But suppose hon. gentlemen could succeed in annihilating Mr. Preston, what would be the situation then? Why, the contract would still be there. And Mr. Preston, I fancy, can look after himself before the committee.

Now I shall refer as briefly as possible to some points with regard to the defence which has been made in behalf of the combine. Of course, we are all agreed that there is a combine; there is no reason why we should spend any time labouring that point. But I did not suspect that we should all come to that agreement so quickly. I have therefore taken the trouble to look up the reply of the steamship companies in which it is contended that no combine exists but that there is just a friendly little get-together. I shall read briefly from this document, which by the way is unsigned. No one has undertaken to put his name to this reply, but I may say that at least Mr. Preston put his name to his own report. That is more than has yet been done by any of those who have come to the defence of the combine, and it is worth something at any rate. The extract from which I am about to read is interesting; it is what convinced the hon. member for Vancouver Centre (Mr. Stevens) that there was no combine.

As mentioned previously in this report there is no "combine" (which in the present day acceptance of the term implies a monopoly), but merely an association of the regular lines, constituting a very small portion of the carriers on the Atlantic, who have agreed

[Mr. Motherwell.]

among themselves to quote on various commodities equivalent rates subject to change on notice; the object of this is simply to prevent the complete demoralization in rates which occurs when there is no such agreement under the keenly competitive conditions which prevail in the north Atlantic trade.

You see, the idea is to keep down competition. When you are anxious that a certain rate shall prevail you naturally do not want some other fellow to come along and vulgarly cut it down. To proceed:

It is practically the same arrangement which obtains as between all large distributors of staple commodities, with the same object, i.e., to prevent uncontrolled price cutting, which, as it destroys proper service, in the end benefits no one. If it were not possible to maintain ocean rates on a reasonable basis of freight the result could only be the elimination of all but the strongest lines and a practical monopoly of the traffic by such lines.

This is so familiar! You can read it in the dark, and it is the kind of thing we have all heard as long as we can remember. It is the old contention, that if you do not control the competition you are going to wipe out everybody and that finally you will have to resort to the sailing vessels of old, and all that sort of thing. There are two or three other gems which I should like to read if I could find them. It would be too bad to miss them, for they are well worth reading, as a defence of the combine. I thought I had turned down the places in which I marked them, but evidently they are so ashamed of themselves that they got under cover. But they are all unsigned; no one has ventured to put his name to the document. Well, of what value is a document of this character to which there

is no signature? What kind of

10 p.m. campaign do they conduct when they refuse to come out in the

open with the name of a responsible person? I would ask hon. gentlemen, how many men do they think will fall over one another in their endeavour to secure a hearing before the committee? They are making much ado about a supposed grievance, but if I were a betting man I would take odds on the number of these gentlemen who will cross the Atlantic to expose Mr. Preston. I can scarcely see them tumbling over one another in the corridors of the Parliament Buildings to get to the committee. But, as I say, if they cannot put their name to an ordinary document like this published in a newspaper, it is not to be expected that they will submit themselves to the searching light of cross-examination. If they come, however, I will welcome them; possibly we will give them a banquet.

Mr. LADNER: I presume the minister wants to be fair in his statements as regards the signing of the various documents. If