

Mr. PUGSLEY: I will get twenty men in St. John to make an offer.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: Well, why does not the hon. gentleman do it?

Mr. PUGSLEY: The hon. minister has not come down with any proposition.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: The hon. gentleman has been something of a promoter, and has large moneyed connections. He has seen the difficulties about tonnage; if he thinks there is money in it, why has he not in some way interested himself and his friends in making a proposition for this shipbuilding? But no proposition has come from him; he has satisfied himself with criticising and finding fault, and has not put within the reach of the Government a single proposition that would be reasonably acceptable. Let me tell the House how the man looks at it to whom you talk about a tonnage subsidy. In order to build wooden vessels I have to make certain preparations, and for that purpose put in certain money; and I cannot turn out a vessel until seven, eight, or ten months from to-day. I get my wooden vessels built. But you do not give me any assurance that the vessel-building business in this country will not by that time be absolutely different from what it is to-day—that peace will not have intervened with all that that involves. That contingency is ahead of me, and I cannot afford to go into the building of wooden vessels except with a very heavy tonnage subsidy to protect me from possible loss. That is the way this man reasons. Capital, under present conditions, is chary about going into the building of vessels with the uncertainties that face it within the next year or year and a half. The position has been so difficult that we have not received one single reasonable offer for the building of wooden vessels.

We have an offer for the building of steel vessels, and the general terms of that offer I will state to the House. Two steel vessels could have been built for this Dominion Government at a rate of \$125 to \$135 per ton, with delivery in the middle part of the year 1917. That is the best offer we got for steel tonnage. The amount asked for, of course, is very large; but the time of delivery is also a factor in the case which must be considered. What we must do in Canada is to divide this thing into two. There is a period of emergency, and there will be a period to succeed this emergency. Having canvassed to a certain extent, the emergency period, let me now say

a few words with reference to the work of shipbuilding in Canada on the basis of permanency, that is, with reference not to the present emergency but to the conditions and the needs of the future. It goes without saying, to my mind, that a country of such large productive capacity as Canada, and with production constantly increasing, occupies an undesirable position if it does not produce and have at command a very considerable commercial tonnage for its own use. That becomes apparent in times like this when, with no commercial marine, the country is at the mercy of the disturbing conditions of war. Altogether, it is a fair axiom that a country with the producing capacity of Canada ought to have a reasonable and growing mercantile marine; and I believe that Canada can have it. It ought to have it, for these potential reasons; it ought to have it because commercial tonnage taken year in and year out, is a profitable investment for a country. Great Britain's wealth is largely built up on the earnings of her commercial marine. Holland, and formerly Belgium, are notable examples of the wealth that comes to countries from large commercial marine, employed year in and year out, having their periods of prosperity and their corresponding periods of adversity, but bringing on the average a good return to the country in earning power. Canada as well ought to try in some way or other to build up a good commercial marine. How is it possible to do that? One may say: let capital run its own course; if capital sees that it would be profitable to invest in building commercial tonnage for Canada, it will do it; on the other hand, if it cannot see its way clear to do that; if it feels that it should depend upon the carrying capacity of outside vessels, it will take its chance in the open market of the world and charter or procure its tonnage as it has necessity for it. I believe that this argument should go along the line of a country having a good, strong, commercial marine of its own, and I do not think you can bring that about by leaving the matter entirely to corporate and private enterprise without some form of aid. Now, what are the forms of aid which can be given? There is a tonnage construction subsidy, whereby for every ton of capacity of vessels built in Canada under certain conditions the Government—the Treasury, the people generally might pay a certain amount in order to give an impetus,