

*Ocean Shipping Rates*

business. But as the Minister of Railways (Mr. Dunning) has just said, we are not under any obligation to the conference, we are no longer members of it. These boats are running in the interests of the Canadian people and their earnings are gradually improving the position of the Canadian Government Merchant Marine.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Does the government intend to build more ships?

Mr. ROBB: What has that to do with the resolution?

Mr. MEIGHEN: I thought if the government was going to add to the size of the baby it would not be complaining about finding it on the doorstep.

Mr. ROBERT FORKE (Brandon): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with some interest to the fine distinctions drawn by hon. members on both sides of the House with regard to the rates now being charged by the Canadian Government Merchant Marine.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Will the hon. member tell me what distinction he heard me draw?

Mr. FORKE: I do not think any of the hon. gentlemen knew what rates were being charged at the present time anyway, so we did not get from them any information on the subject. My hon. friend from Marquette says he is very much in love with the cow. Well, I do not blame him at all. I am in love with the cow myself—so long as I can get somebody else to milk her. But the hon. member never gets on his feet without making slighting references to the people of the west who grow wheat. Now, I think he is making a mistake in adopting this attitude. I agree with every word he says in regard to mixed farming and the raising of as many beef and dairy cattle as possible, but I would remind him that for a great many years to come wheat will be the staple production of the three prairie provinces. It is wheat that is going to help pay the national debt, and we must not forget that. As to doing anything to help mixed farming, I am at one with the hon. member for Marquette. He sometimes tells me—I do not think I shall be betraying his confidence when I say this—that although he sits on the Conservative side and I sit on the Progressive side, our ideas are not very far apart after all. I repeat, I am prepared to agree with him that we should encourage mixed farming, but I dissent from his slighting references to the farmers of the west who are raising millions of bushels of wheat, a production that means so much to the Dominion.

[Mr. Robb.]

Hon. W. R. MOTHERWELL (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I hope my hon. friend from Marquette does not expect me to engage in a discussion on the advantages of diversified farming on a resolution of this kind, and yet I do not want to pass up his appeal to me to say something. Like him, I was keenly interested in the operations of the Canadian Government Merchant Marine, and when this government took office I made some inquiries regarding its relationship with the north Atlantic conference, and also the capacity of the boats to carry cattle, because about that time this government interceded with the home government and eventually succeeded in having the cattle embargo removed.

An hon. MEMBER: What!

Mr. MOTHERWELL: With the aid, of course, of our predecessors, who had been working assiduously along the same line. I communicated with Sir Henry Thornton, who partially converted four boats for the cattle traffic, each accommodating approximately 265 head, or an aggregate capacity of a little less than 1,100 head. Besides providing insufficient accommodation for the traffic, these boats were not very satisfactory in other respects. Therefore Sir Henry thought that this was a sufficient experiment, especially as the results were not too satisfactory from his point of view, and I frankly admit that I did not make any further attempts to convince him of the desirability of converting other boats into cattle boats for the reason that it cost a lot of money to make the conversion, and they were none too satisfactory after they were converted. Further, they did not carry sufficient cattle to take care of the situation. As my hon. friend knows, the Petersen contract came up for consideration last year, and one of the primary objects then was to improve the situation with respect not only to cattle space but cattle rates as well. My hon. friend perhaps heard enough of the discussion to know that not very much encouragement was given to the proposal of the government by the other side of the House.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Hear, hear.

Mr. MOTHERWELL: If I recall the situation, my hon. friend—

Mr. MULLINS: May I ask the minister a question?

Mr. MOTHERWELL: I will be through in a moment. My hon. friend was an important witness at the inquiry in connection with that matter, and I remember that he disagreed very strongly with some of my hon. friends