

West Indies Trade Agreement

Mr. DUNNING: Oh, quite. We are not introducing any outside interests whatever. I assure my hon. friend there is no intention to introduce any outside interests.

Mr. MacLAREN: Will the boats of this company run between the West India islands and Canadian ports alone, or is it proposed that they will touch American ports?

Mr. DUNNING: The treaty covers that.

Mr. MacLAREN: A few years ago it was permissible that they call at American ports. Under the present arrangements it is proposed that they will be restricted to West Indian and Canadian ports.

Mr. MALCOLM: The terms of the treaty are to give direct service. There is no treaty affecting American ports.

Mr. BENNETT: What the minister has said might be well said with respect to any company which changes its name. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company changed the name of the Dominion Express Company to the Canadian Pacific Express Company for reasons they gave which were good and sufficient. The minister says the service may be known as the Canadian National Steamships Company for the same reason, because the Canadian National with respect to railways has become so well known. But there is in this bill a serious matter raised by the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George last year, and that is this: What is the obligation imposed upon this country by reason of this legislation? Whatever obligation is imposed upon this country by reason of this legislation—it does not make any difference whether it is guaranteed securities or not—the people of this country must pay if the corporation does not. That is as clear as anything in the world. Whether the obligation is imposed with respect to deadweight debt or guaranteed securities does not make much difference. The Canadian National got \$10,000,000 out of the people of this country last year in cash, and the taxpayers paid it. It did not make much difference where it went; whether it went direct to them or in some other way, we had to pay it.

I have looked through this bill, as I did the resolution, with some degree of care. Who is going to build these ships? How are the contracts to be let? What are the circumstances under which the ships are to be built? Speaking for myself, I think there should be added to this bill a provision that not one single contract should be let without public tender with respect to these ships. I have not any doubt that that should be done.

[Mr. Stevens.]

I have not observed what has taken place in this country during the years I have been able to remember without having learned something, and legislation of this character is an invitation to the collector—not the collector of customs either, as we understand the term. I think the time has come to insist that there be added to the legislation itself a provision that no contract shall be let until there has been first public notice and public tenders called for.

Then you will have three sets of figures to consider. You will have an offer to build these ships from continental Europe; you will have an offer to build these ships from Great Britain; you will have an offer to build them in Canada. Then there will be pressure to build them in Canada, because that offers greater facilities for those who desire that to be done. There will be a certain amount of pressure to build the ships in Great Britain; that will be less, and the pressure to build them in continental Europe will be less still. Everybody knows that in the history of building ships, the Royal Mail Company and other lines have found it necessary during the last few years, in order to be able to compete at all upon the high seas, to have their ships built where they could be built most cheaply, and they have had them built in Amsterdam, Hamburg and at the Vulcan Works in Stettin, because the price at which they could be built there was very much lower than what they could be built for in England. The British shipowner could not compete with German and Netherlands built ships if he had to pay British ship-building costs.

We in Canada are faced with this situation. This government made a treaty with the West Indies. That treaty involved this country in large financial obligations. For several days the member for St. Lawrence-St. George endeavoured to ascertain from the government of the day what that involved in dollars and cents. No figures were forthcoming. There came a change of administration for a few months which left those who assumed the responsibility in very great difficulty, because the question of implementing our promises under that treaty had not been commenced; the ships had not been contracted for or built. There was a small sum of money available that enabled us to maintain our word of honour with respect to the West Indies to a limited extent. The Minister of Trade and Commerce knows the demands made from the West Indies with respect to this service being provided. They say: You have contracted to give us this service, and