

Mr. PUGSLEY: The minister will remember that some days ago when this matter was up, he assured me he would call for tenders so as to give builders in eastern Canada as well as builders in western Canada an opportunity of tendering.

Mr. COCHRANE: Yes.

Mr. PUGSLEY: When were those contracts entered into?

Mr. COCHRANE: One in March and one in June of this year. The copies of the contracts have been laid on the Table.

Mr. PUGSLEY: When were the contractors released from their obligations?

Mr. COCHRANE: In August.

Mr. PUGSLEY: Just a few weeks ago?

Mr. COCHRANE: Yes.

Mr. MACDONALD: What are these boats to be used for? Are they to be employed in connection with the Intercolonial railway or on what service are they to be used?

Mr. COCHRANE: They were to be employed on a route from Vancouver and Victoria through the Panama canal to St. John and Halifax and also to the West Indies.

Mr. MACDONALD: Are they to be used in connection with the government railways?

Mr. COCHRANE: Yes.

Mr. MACDONALD: That is a pretty far off connection. The minister's jurisdiction in regard to the government railways extends only from Winnipeg to the Maritime Provinces. I do not see what purpose there could be in the Railway Department operating ships.

Mr. COCHRANE: They will not only take freight that the Intercolonial brings to Halifax and St. John, but bring freight from the West and deliver it to those ports. I hope the day will soon come when we shall have ships to run in connection with the government railways across the Atlantic to Liverpool and London.

Mr. MACDONALD: That is a pious wish that hon. gentlemen opposite declared a few years ago was impossible of fulfillment because of the alleged impossibility of constructing ships in Canada. We were told that was a dream that could be realized only after fifty years. I am glad the minister is coming to the view that it is possible a few years hence for ships to be constructed in Canada which will be able to carry on our transportation business.

[Mr. Cochrane.]

Mr. COCHRANE: I do not think I made a statement like that.

Mr. MACDONALD: No, the minister did not, but a good many other hon. gentlemen opposite did, including the minister who sits next to him (Sir George Foster) and the Prime Minister.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: My hon. friend is quite hazy in his ideas.

Mr. MACDONALD: The committee ought to consider the question of the construction of ships for the purpose of supplying the wastage that is going on due to the destruction of vessels by submarines. This is one of the most important problems that can engage the attention of the House and the Government. Hon. members from the Maritime Provinces may probably understand better than hon. gentlemen who come from the central parts of Canada the unfortunate position in which Canada is as regards the transportation of our products across the ocean as a result of the lack of ships.

Day after day, week after week, during the last few months, ever since the submarine campaign commenced, ships of a tonnage of 1,600 and upwards have been sunk at the rate of from 18 to 40 a week. Millions of tons of shipping have been destroyed. Notwithstanding these facts, we in Canada are doing practically nothing with a view to making up that wastage. It is true that the Minister of Finance advanced to the Imperial Munitions Board \$10,000,000 as part payment on account of money that is owing by Canada to the British Government. That \$10,000,000 is being appropriated by the Imperial Munitions Board for the construction of ships of a certain type. Here and there steel ships are being constructed; the industry is being successfully carried on in British Columbia. But when we bring up the matter of the construction of steel ships in eastern Canada, we are told that it is very difficult to get steel plates. The very fact that we cannot get steel plates for the construction of these vessels is evidence of that lack of organization that has characterized all the operations of the Government in connection with the war. Why is it that steel plates can be obtained for the construction of steel ships at Vancouver by the Imperial Munitions Board, but cannot be obtained for the construction of ships in eastern Canada? As to the building of wooden ships, with all due justice to the Imperial Munitions Board, the plans which they submitted to the people engaged in the wooden ship-