

fleet, we thought it better to have eleven rather than seven ships. In this we acted on the advice of the admiralty. Still we are blamed because we are not to have an armoured cruiser of the 'Dreadnought' type. Perhaps I can quote an authority on this point which will satisfy hon. gentlemen opposite. Those staunch imperialists will not be satisfied unless we have a 'Dreadnought' in our navy. While that view is respectable, it does not compare with the opinion of a competent man qualified to speak on the question. I am sure every one will agree that I could not quote a better authority than the old tar, Lord Charles Beresford — as good a seaman as there is in the British navy. In an interview published in the 'Times' of last summer, Lord Charles Beresford said:

His view of the situation was that our great Dominions could best help us, not by spending two millions on battleships to serve in British waters, but by making proposals for defending themselves.

But he questioned the wisdom of their putting money into torpedo vessels and submarines and sending a large amount over here to build a battleship, the life of which was only twenty years, with luck, and might be only twenty months. If they invested two millions in home defence, and in having cruisers which could go out and protect their trade routes, he thought it would be a better investment than in helping to defend the shores of this country.

That, sir, is what we are doing under this Bill. In another interview, also in the 'Times,' Sir Charles Beresford spoke as follows:

For the colonies, cruisers are much better, as the idea of protecting Britain and weakening the defence of the colonies is all wrong.

These were the reasons which actuated us, and I think they are of such a character as will command the approval of this House.

With regard to our scheme, as I stated on the first reading, it is our intention to build eleven ships—four Bristols, one Boadicea, and six destroyers. I have given the character of these ships. It is our intention to have them, if possible, built in this country. That will cost a little more and we are prepared to pay a little more provided the difference is not extravagant. We intend to call for tenders as soon as this Bill becomes law, in order to see whether we can have this plant put in this country with the view of building these ships. I have been asked also how long it would take. I must say that I am not able to-day to give these details; I shall be better informed when we come to the committee

stage. My colleague, the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, has been unwell, and I have not been permitted to have as many interviews with him as I could wish but giving the matter the best attention that I can, I may say that it would take probably one year to complete a plant for building the ships in this country, and then probably four years to complete these eleven ships. As I said at the first reading of the Bill, the cost of these ships would be a little over \$1,000,000, and the total cost of maintenance, including upkeep of masts, machinery, sea stores, fuel, interest and depreciation is estimated at \$4,253,000.

Mr. FOSTER. I did not understand my right hon. friend clearly. Do I understand him to say that it will take one year to construct a plant which will be sufficient to build this fleet, and then four years to complete the vessels?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. That I understand.

Mr. FOSTER. The Prime Minister gives that to the House, of course, as sufficiently certain, to base the judgment of the House upon.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I would not say that.

Mr. FOSTER. That is what we really want.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. It would be difficult to give more than an approximate idea upon that until we know exactly the proposition made to us. Then we can speak accurately. I give these figures as the result of the best inquiry I can make, no more.

Mr. FOSTER. Who is the authority upon whom my right hon. friend depends?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I cannot give that to my hon. friend to-day.

Mr. FOSTER. We might get into the same difficulty we did in regard to the Grand Trunk Pacific. We want to avoid that if possible.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. That is no doubt a laudable object; but I am sure that my hon. friend himself would not regret the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific even if it cost more than it has, and I think perhaps it will be the same with the navy.

Mr. FOSTER. I would not have my right hon. friend take silence as consent. I am altogether opposed to that view. Can he tell what the plant which would be suitable