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## MR. COAKER'S SPEECH ON THE SEALING BILL.

Shows That It Was Intended Solely to Protect the Lives of the Sealers and Encourage the Industry—Replies to the Reasons Advanced in Favor of Allowing the Florizel and the Kean Family Monopolizing the Industry—Shows How Cashin, Who Signed the Report of the Select Committee, Refused for Reasons Best Known to Himself to Stand By His Former Decision.

Mr. Chairman: I have just one or two observations to make upon this bill. This matter has received quite a lot of consideration. I do not know that any bills introduced into the House since we had seats here has received such consideration as this one. I do not think that anyone will conclude that the Select Committee that sat to consider this matter could be convicted of doing anything from personal motives or in the way of animosity. I think that all look at it from a national point of view. Many of the suggestions that could not be accepted by the Upper House last year, in which we could not see eye-to-eye were adopted by this Committee and they will be found embodied in this bill.

#### Safety Of The Crew

The Committee took two points into consideration in dealing with this bill. One point was that they wished to consider the safety of the crew. Another was that they wished in considering the safety of the men they were obliged to apply very severe penalties for any breach of this act that could be traced to the officers of the ship, for they considered such an offence should be treated in a very drastic way. It is alright for those people to talk about the men going on the ice without orders, and all that sort of thing, but the captain of that ship is the man in charge, and it is his duty to look after the safety of his crew. On the other hand it was considered that for any offence for which the owners could be held responsible there should be a heavy penalty.

#### Hours For Work

Clause "two" might be cited as an example of what the Committee recommends for safeguarding the men. This section provides that no man is to remain on the ice between certain hours; that if he is ordered to go there is a severe penalty or punishment for the person that orders him, if it is proved. The crews in future, if this bill becomes law, will not have to work after dark or before sunrise. This was not done because the committee thought that the captain should be interfered with in any way, or that they thought it might take longer to get seals, but just because the committee thought that there should be some hard and fast rule laid down to govern this question. For this reason, although a crew is allowed to take seals aboard or to do any work around the ship, yet it is absolutely forbidden to have men sent out to work, taking seals after dark or before daylight. The first and only reason for this is to preserve the safety of the men. Another section, section 3 provides punishment. The punishment is a severe one. We who were on the Committee thought that no punishment could be too severe for this offence. There could be no punishment too severe for a master who would risk the lives of any of his crew, and in such a case it is recommended that that such a master shall not only be punished in the ordinary way, but that he shall lose his certificate, and so be debarred from ever again going to the sealfishery as master. This is a very severe punishment, but as I have said there is no punishment too heavy for a man guilty of such conduct, in the future the master will realize who is responsible.

#### Men Run Many Risks.

I do not wish to infer that there are captains who deliberately risk the lives of their crews; but it is known to everybody that there are lots risk in this industry, and the captains will after this have to be responsible for it. We know that all are anxious to get seals, but we also must take into consideration the fact that they have on board these ships some two hundred and fifty men, all under the charge of the captain, and these are a first charge on him. There is a prevailing feeling to take a chance at the seal fishery that would not be tolerated at any other calling in life. Now we want to do away with that. We want to make this industry as safe as it can be made by law. I think this is as perfect a law as can be made with regard to punishment for captains or officers who do anything wrong.

#### Prohibiting The Steel Ships

There is one important clause in this bill, in which provision is made to stop the larger ships from prosecuting the fishery, and if there is anything that has caused a difference of opinion between the owners and

this House, it is that one section. It is thought that if by this clause these ships will be prohibited from going to the fishery, that in future they will clear from Canadian ports. I do not think this will be the case. I do not think that if this law is placed on our statute book it will be possible for these ships to clear from foreign ports, because if the Government of this country asked the Government of Canada to stop it, they would be only too willing to do so, provided they believe us to be sincere.

#### Canadian Government Will Help

I was talking to some Canadian members when I was at Ottawa recently about this question, and about the small steamers which had prosecuted the fishery, the whalers of which there was so much talk about last year, and they said that if any intimation as to the desirability of not having these ships cleared before a certain date had been transmitted to the Department of Marine by our local Department of Marine, that these ships would, were it proven in the interest of the fishery, have to sail on March 10th.

I do not think there will be any difficulty if the bill in arranging this matter becomes law, because the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, as I have said, could communicate with the Canadian Government, asking for legislation to meet the case. So far as that part of it is concerned that could be easily overcome.

#### The Case Of The Florizel

The question then arises as to whether one steamer which has not been bought by the Russian Government should be debarred under this clause. Shall we allow that steamer to prosecute the fishery and so discourage the others, or shall we allow this ship to go and prepare the way for the return of the whole steel fleet. If you allow one to go, what can you do to prevent the ones which have been sold to the Russian Government from being re-purchased by the owners here to prosecute the fishery; as we now hear they are about to do. We cannot allow one to go and prohibit the others. Why should we let the Bowring with the Florizel enter the fishery, and keep out the others. To debar one steamer only, would mean the taking of 270 men from the fishery, while by doing so you would encourage 12 or 14 ship crews. I do not mean by this that the Florizel would take all the seals, if sent to the sealfishery, but with her superior speed it is possible for her to make competition uneven and create dissatisfaction.

#### 10,000 Fishermen Want This Law

The men want to see the ships equally balanced, and 150 petitions, signed by 10,000 fishermen, have been presented to this House asking for this. They know and everybody knows that great results will come if the steel ships are debarred. The owners would not be deprived of making money. This year we have a lesson of this before us. Six or seven loads of fat have been brought in. There was more in these trips for the owners than there would have been had steel ships prosecuted the fishery. These ships bring in loads worth from \$70,000 or \$80,000, and there is consequently a good profit for the owners, while in the case of

the steel ships they have to get 25,000 or 30,000 seals before they pay expenses. Take the Florizel for example. She brought in this year 46,000 or 47,000 seals, and it will be found that after paying the expenses this year and the expenses of the fleet last year that she will not have cleared \$5,000 for the owners. You take on the other hand the Eagle, which got 33,000. She made twice as much for her owners as did the Florizel. The wooden ships can make \$25,000 profit on a load, while the Florizel would not clear \$1,000 for her owners on the same number of seals. The getting of a cargo of 25,000 seals in one of these steel ships does very little good to the country. It is all used in expenses. You take on the other hand the wooden ships, and it will be found that the country benefits to a wonderful degree, because of the small expenses incurred in operating and preparing the ships.

#### Would Benefit All

I feel Sir, that if we carry out the clause where steel ships of the larger type are forbidden, in a few years we will have with us again, a fair fleet of wooden ships. In all probability two ships which were once used at the sealfishery, but which were sold to the American Government and used on the Pacific Coast, will be likely purchased and used at the sealfishery. The Aurora, if she should ever return from the expedition she is engaged in, would likely be added to the fleet. In these ships would have sufficient capacity to bring in all available young seals each year.

Another clause prohibits taking hoods for three years. Under the circumstances it is only right and proper for this House to see that any species of seals are not exterminated. The hoods have had a chance to increase during the past two years, and if for three years more we enforce a close season, there is no reason why there should not be quite as many brought in in the future as in the past. This, too, can be done without any great inconvenience, and what will possibly be lost to the owners and men in the next year or so will undoubtedly be made up afterwards. In fact they stand to gain, and it is only fair for us as legislators to make such provisions as are necessary in this case and provided for in this act.

#### Aim Is To Benefit The Industry.

There is another serious and important clause relating to the right of property in seals. The time has now been extended to forty-eight hours. In the Bill last year the time was twenty-four hours, but this alteration has been made in order to meet the wishes of the Upper House, and is that period of time which the joint committee of both Houses decided upon as being most beneficial to this industry. There is still a difference of opinion prevailing on this matter, but I may say that this Bill is in the nature of an experiment, and anything that practice will prove unworkable will be altered by future legislation. The one aim and object of this Bill is to benefit the industry. If, after two or three years, it can be shown that this clause is not advantageous to the welfare of the sealfishery, our laws are not as the laws of the Medes and Persians, and can obviate any provision conflicting with the interests of the people. It will be

the duty of the Legislature to amend the provisions of this Bill, should the occasion arise, but this Bill is a fair and honest attempt to improve present conditions and merits a fair show, and I sincerely hope that this House will regard it in that light.

#### Insuring The Sealer.

Another provision of surpassing importance is, that in connection with the insuring of the sealer at \$1,000.00, if, through exposure he is incapacitated in any way he is entitled under this provision to a certain compensation not exceeding one thousand dollars. This clause, no doubt, will be thoroughly appreciated by the whole country, for the time has passed when the man, who loses his life at the seal fishery, from exposure, should leave a family destitute. It has been argued that, if we meet with a disaster such as that of the "Newfoundland" the ship-owners will be ruined in consequence of this provision. I hope never to see an occurrence of that disaster, and as ever since that time it has been the one aim and object of our Legislature to prevent the possibility of a like disaster. I do not think it likely that Newfoundland will suffer a similar sorrow again.

#### Present Bill Has Strong Backing

Last year the owners of sealing vessels objected to this very provision, because, as they set out, the cost of this insurance was greater than the profits of the industry would warrant, and they suggested various compromises, such as the men themselves paying a share, the Government paying a portion, and the owners a portion, say one-third, but their suggestions met with the resistance of this House. The Select Committee's decision you have here, embodied in this Bill. This Bill is brought before you with a strong backing, as it is recommended by a joint committee of both Houses. It is fair and reasonable and has for its one object the preservation and safety of the crew, and the encouragement of the industry as far as possible.

#### As Regards The Future

I believe the day will come when the seal fishery will be conducted with smaller ships propelled by motor power. This, in itself, will mean an impetus as regards shipbuilding, and there will be a turn in the tide as far as the sealers' portion of the voyage is concerned. I am prepared to give everything in connection with the industry full and fair consideration. The men must be encouraged, if they are going to conduct the seal fishery in wooden ships. Of course it is only natural to suppose that wooden ships will disappear as time passes. I personally give them about twenty years to pass away. It has been said that ships, such as the Sable Island are not large enough to engage profitably in freighting in summer, and that they can not pay if utilized only for the seal fishery. Personally, I believe, there will be lots of work in the future for ships of that size, that is to say, ships of about four hundred to four hundred and fifty tons. These ships will be able to make both ends meet without difficulty from the mere fact of their engaging in the local coasting traffic of this Colony, as well as the sealfishery.

#### Work For Small Steel Fleet

I believe that in 1918 when our contract with Bowring is over, where we have two ships now, we will have four ships of the size of the Sable Island taking their places. These ships will be built so as to contend with ice conditions, and will be especially constructed and adapted for the sealing industry, and will be a valuable addition to the sealing fleet if the big steel ships are debarred. If we make any progress in connection with our Scotch packed herring industry, and can, in this connection, meet the requirements of American trade, this class of steamer will be particularly useful and take a prominent position in connection with that service, for it will become a large industry if we take care to attend to it properly. I believe the day will come, if we progress as we ought to and give the requisite attention to fishery matters, when we will have work in summer for twenty ships such as the Sable Island. If so the problem of finding a fleet of small steel ships will be solved, to great benefit of the Colony. It is my hope that the Bill will

stand as we have it now before us, and I trust that the Upper House will be in sympathy with its provisions, and that we will not have any further trouble with that House over Legislation of this nature.

(Continued on page 5)

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