

Mr. DUFF: I do not know just what my hon. friend means by that. If he is comparing his common sense and mine, I am willing to admit he has more than I have.

Mr. IRVINE: I was not making any such comparison. I asked my hon. friend for a reason for the hope he has expressed that this proposal will bring rates down. That is what I referred to as common sense. If you can give me a commonsense reason for this hope, I might be inclined to hope with you.

Mr. DUFF: Perhaps my hon. friend was not listening to the question asked me by an hon. member sitting at the other end of the House with regard to the rates on grain. The argument was that there was no conference rate on grain, that grain rates depended on the number of tramp steamers coming into port at different times and looking for a cargo. If it is true,—and it is—that the more tonnage there is available, the lower the rates are going to be, when the government brings down this proposal, whether it is for ten or twenty or more ships, if they set the rate at which these ships shall carry freight, that certainly is going to have an influence in reducing the rates, because it brings in just that much additional competition for the traffic. I think that is a sufficient reason why my hon. friend and every other member of this House should support this proposal, provided the government can give us sufficient information to warrant us proceeding with it.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The hon. member made reference a moment ago to a complaint filed with the late government in 1921 from the Dominion Millers' Association, and made the statement that the government did nothing.

Mr. DUFF: I did not get as far as that.

Mr. MEIGHEN: He made it some time before. I know he will be glad to get the information that, on the contrary, the government called a conference in relation to that complaint, which had to do with the differentiation against flour as compared with wheat, and as a result of the conference, when all got together, the large shippers of wheat admitted there was not any unjust discrimination, and consequently no step was necessary.

Mr. DUFF: I do not know exactly where I left off, Mr. Speaker, but I will try and proceed. I think I was saying to my hon. friend from East Calgary (Mr. Irvine) that the people of Alberta certainly think they have a grievance with regard to freight rates on cattle. I can only repeat that if that is so, it seems to me that everybody in this House should endeavour to support the government

in the proposals which they are making, and should be willing at least to allow those proposals to go to a committee, which the hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Low) has told us he is willing to appoint so that the House can be apprised of both sides of this important question. There is no doubt that the question of ocean freight rates is a very important question to the people of this country, and especially in view of the fact that the country to the south of us has in the Fordney tariff put up a very high tariff wall. And I should just like to say here that the greatest mistake this country made with regard to the cattle business, and business generally, was in 1911 when it turned down reciprocity with the United States. If that agreement had been carried through, we would not perhaps be compelled now to ship all our cattle and wheat and other commodities to Great Britain and the continent of Europe. But we are faced with that condition, and it seems to me that as long as that condition continues, we should do what we can to remedy the situation. I think that the government is justified in doing everything possible to preserve our present markets and to increase future business, and this is one way by which the government can perhaps get rates reduced, so that our traffic will flow east and west, instead of north and south. It seems to me, therefore, that every encouragement should be given the government in this matter.

It has been held by some people that instead of making this contract with Sir William Petersen, we should use the ships of the Canadian Government Merchant Marine. Now if I have one complaint to make in regard to this contract, it is that perhaps the ships will not be fast enough. In my humble opinion, instead of being 11-knot, they should be 13- or 15-knot boats. Because in the winter time from November to March coming west over the Atlantic ocean, there is no question about it, a small low-speed boat cannot make regular trips. For that reason I say when anybody argues that the ships of the Canadian Government Merchant Marine could take the place of even those ships which are proposed under this contract there is absolutely no ground for making such an argument. Those ships are slow, they are not fitted for this purpose.

Mr. MEIGHEN: They are faster than these ships.

Mr. DUFF: No, they average about nine knots.

Mr. MEIGHEN: In actual operation nine to ten knots but the test speed, as compared with this, is higher.