

travelled on these great steamship lines, or who has had business to do with these companies, or has watched them for the last fifty years and noted their progress and development, must certainly realize that they have been a great asset in the transportation service of the world. I am sure, therefore that this parliament will not take any action that will in any way affect or prejudice these companies as long as they do what is right for the plain people of this country.

The matter of discrimination in rates, as I said a moment ago, has been discussed a great many times, and shortly after the hon. member for West York and Right Hon. Sir George E. Foster were identified with this question it was shown that a certain company offered to take up the matter of fixing rates. Let me say before I read a letter in that connection, that it was decided by the Dominions Royal Commission:

That it is not desirable that the operations of the steamship companies should remain longer without some measure of government supervision.

They go on to say:

For ourselves we regard it as intolerable that British ship owners should be in a position to initiate or countenance practices of a kind so directly inimical to British trade.

Now, Sir, it is contended, of course, that the reason these rates are so high at the present time is, that there is not sufficient shipping to permit the charges to be lowered. It is a well known fact, however, that there is at least 15,000,000 tons more shipping to-day than there was before the war—in fact there is a total tonnage of something like 28,000,000 tons, representing an aggregate of some ten thousand and some odd hundred vessels.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I do not wish to interrupt the hon. member, but is not that the tonnage in only one area? I observe from the authoritative figures I have that the total tonnage is about 61,000,000 tons.

Mr. DUFF: I get the figures I have quoted from Lloyd's classification.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I think that is only for one area.

Mr. DUFF: I think the right hon. gentleman is correct, as I notice in a report of the United States merchant marine that in the United States in 1914 there were 7,920,000 tons, and in 1921 there were 18,282,000 tons; and that the gross tonnage of American and foreign vessels in 1921 was—American vessels, 67,946,000 tons, and foreign vessels, 70,000,000 tons. But the figures show conclusively that the reason given—that tonnage is not available—cannot be accepted in view of the

fact that there is such a large amount of tonnage offered all over the world.

The proposition made by the government in order to arrive at some conclusion in this matter is a very important one. They say in the resolution that repeated and continuous representations have been made by the agricultural community of the Dominion and the manufacturing, producing, commercial and financial interests as well as the general merchants throughout the country, that these trading communities and interests have been and are still seriously handicapped and hampered in their trade relations with overseas countries. Perhaps this agreement, which I will refer to later, may not be the ultimate solution of this great question, but one thing for which we must give this government credit is that they have had the courage to tackle this problem, and this is certainly in their favour. They have been told by merchants and shippers all over the country that there is a grievance. Whether there is as great a grievance as these people try to make out is a matter to be decided later, but the fact remains that this government decided there was a grievance, and in order to remedy this grievance they have brought down before parliament the agreement which I have in my hand, which you have all heard read.

We have heard several speeches both for and against this proposition, and it seems to me this question is entirely too big to introduce personalities. Of course, it has been claimed that all the information which the government has is contained in a report made by a certain gentleman whose name I need not mention. Whether that is so or not—and I do not think it is so, and I think I can show that the government has had a great deal more information than is contained in that report—it is not a sufficient answer to the government's proposition to say that because this gentleman made the report this parliament should not favourably consider it; and it is useless to draw a red herring over the trail referring to the fact that this gentleman, like the rest of us in parliament, and others outside, at one time and another took part in certain by-elections. That in my opinion will not satisfy the people of this country, and hon. members who speak on this subject must certainly give better reasons for refusing to adopt this resolution than statements made with regard to the gentleman who has made the report. As I said, the question is too big entirely for that. What we have to decide is whether there is a combine, or not. If there is a combine, then I think it is up to this government and parliament to try to find a remedy. Perhaps the