

Mr. MANION: The fight between free traders and protectionists ceased this afternoon. There are no more free traders except a few down in that corner.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I do not recognize any difference on the issue of free trade between the two old political parties. What I suggested to the minister a few evenings ago in connection with the construction of these ships was that if it were necessary to build them in Canada—and I expressed the hope that they would be built in Canada even at a higher cost—the difference in cost should be absorbed out of the treasury so that the extra capitalization would not be charged to these ships and tend to hinder the development of trade between maritime ports and the West Indies. I have no doubt that if these ships were to be built in Canada the Canadian companies would want to raise the price; but I think that could be gotten around because there should be some means of ascertaining the relative costs—the cost of construction in foreign countries, in Great Britain, and in Canada. I think when those figures were arrived at the government could very well allow that difference in cost to the Canadian manufacturers. If the tenders of the Canadian shipyards are excessive, give them to understand that unless their figures are reduced the contract for the construction of the ships would go to another country. But I think in any case the difference in cost should be absorbed out of the treasury.

Mr. CANTLEY: One of the gentlemen who has just spoken referred to the fact that public ownership does not get a fair show as against private enterprise. In a matter of this kind they get more than a fair show. As to that there can be no possible doubt. As far as the Canadian Government Merchant Marine is concerned I do not think anybody can say that it is operating under any disadvantage as compared with private ownership. I do not know of any, and I do not think any can be shown.

It is rather strange to hear members from the west getting up here and protesting more or less against this service. The fact of the matter is that ninety per cent of the flour consumed in the western islands and ninety-eight per cent of the flour consumed in the eastern islands is Canadian flour. Not only that, but large quantities of other products, agricultural products for example, are being shipped from Canada to the West Indies which would not go there if it were not for this service. These boats come up the St. Lawrence in summer, and they have a direct route from Montreal clear down to the West

[Mr. Campbell.]

Indies. That is something they could not have under any other arrangement. There is a good deal of advantage in shipping by this route as against shipping by the American ports. I do not want to go into that feature of the matter again, but every man conversant with the trade knows what those advantages are.

In regard to the construction of the boats, the minister has convinced me that he has not any intention, or the government either, of going to the continent to have them built. I deny that ships built on the continent today are cheaper in the long run, working experience and necessary replacements considered, than boats which are built in this country. British owners have had some experience in that connection and those experiences are not likely to be repeated. If the Minister of Railways has any doubt as to the advisability of building these vessels in Canada, I think I can relieve him of those doubts. There will be competition, there is no doubt about that. There are four or five yards—there are two or three at least—who would be active competitors to-morrow for the building of the two capital ships. I take it that these ships are to be say 400 feet long and say 42 to 45 feet beam, or thereabouts. There are three yards, probably four in Canada, in which those two boats can be built. Let me point out again, as briefly as possible, the advantage which one yard would have in building the two boats. There are detailed drawings to get out, there are the moulds, templates and half a hundred other things, the cost of which is just split in two, determined by the fact of whether you are building two boats or one. If there were four boats to be built the cost would be cut in four instead of in two. As far as the three smaller boats are concerned they can be built in half a dozen places in Canada. I have no doubt there will be very active competition for them. I cannot tell how much greater the cost will be in Canada than in the old country; the minister can, but I presume some advantage would and should be given to Canada yards in competition with Great Britain.

Mr. DUNNING: Unquestionably.

Mr. CANTLEY: I thank the minister for that. That is all I want to say, except to emphasize the reference I have already made to those boats coming up the St. Lawrence too early in the season. The minister was kind enough to deal with the other matters I brought up, but he did not refer to that, and I would be glad if he would do so.