

Atlantic coast or the Pacific, or from the St. Lawrence district, but in addition they are of the utmost importance to Canada as a whole.

We are a great exporting nation. We are always boasting about our exports, and at the same time we all admit that export trade is vital to prosperity in Canada; this trade has to be carried in ships of one kind or another.

During the war the government built merchant ships and each session we asked questions as to what they were to be used for after the war. I think it was pretty generally understood that Canada would try to carry her exported goods in her own bottoms. I hope that will be the policy followed, but I am somewhat disturbed by the minister's statement to-night. He said that Canada now has 154 merchant vessels. In addition to that, there are a certain number of Fort class freighters. I do not believe the minister said how many of those we have.

Mr. HOWE: I think ninety-four of the 10,000 tons of the Fort series and fourteen of the 4,700 tons, the latter of which have now been sold.

Mr. GREEN: That would make a total of 108?

Mr. HOWE: Yes.

Mr. GREEN: With the fourteen sold we would have ninety-four 10,000 ton ships, and apparently these are all being operated now by the United Kingdom. I presume that eventually they are to come back to Canada.

Mr. HOWE: Negotiations are under way for a bare boat charter to the United Kingdom.

Mr. GREEN: In all likelihood they will form part of the British merchant marine?

Mr. HOWE: Yes.

Mr. GREEN: That would leave Canada with 154 ships. I presume there are no other freighters under the Canadian flag—

Mr. HOWE: Oh, yes.

Mr. GREEN: —working in the export trade.

Mr. HOWE: Another million tons.

Mr. GREEN: That is, privately owned. The minister said that an offer is now being made to sell these 154 ships to operators under the Canadian flag. I hope that he will be successful in that endeavour. Can he tell us whether it is intention to sell those ships to other countries if they cannot be

sold to Canadians? If that is done the ships will no longer be in the Canadian merchant marine. I think the committee and the country are entitled to some assurance that Canada will have a merchant navy in peace time sufficiently large to carry the bulk of her export trade. We should also like some assurance concerning the faster freighters. The minister said that there are three diesel freighters being built. Are there any more, or is that the total number of our faster freighters? A year ago some of us suggested that faster freighters should be built; that in our construction we should not be confined to the slow boats. At that time the minister disagreed. He said that most of our exports were of bulk nature and did not require fast ships; that those slow ships would be good enough. There now seems to be a tendency to want the faster freighters.

Mr. HOWE: I think my hon. friend should be accurate. I said that we were tooled to make the standard 10,000 ton freighter; that a change would entail the loss of time in the shipyards, and that as long as the effort must be for more and more ships Canada could not afford to go into the faster ships.

Mr. GREEN: I have not *Hansard* here covering that discussion, but my memory is fairly clear on that matter. I am quite certain that the minister went a good deal farther and justified the construction of nothing but 10,000 ton slow ships on the ground that they were the most suitable for the Canadian export trade.

Mr. HOWE: I was not talking post-war; I was talking about the war period. I may say I have no regrets.

Mr. GREEN: I think the minister is offering an alibi now, but we will not pursue it further. There was a press dispatch which appeared on October 25 under the heading: "Dominion to sell fifty Park ships." It is taken from the *Vancouver Province* which says:

Fifty or more 10,000-ton Park Steamships Limited freighters are reportedly on the block for prices as low as a fifth of their original cost.

Then it goes on to say that the vessels cost \$2,000,000 each to build in Canadian shipyards. If that report is correct it would mean that these ships would be sold for \$400,000. The minister can correct me if that is wrong.

Mr. HOWE: It is very wrong.