

As I said a moment ago, this question is not a new one. In 1911, before Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who was then Prime Minister, went to the Imperial conference, representations were made to him about this important matter, and he decided to take up this question at the conference. After discussing the matter with the representatives of the British government and of the overseas Dominions there present, Sir Wilfrid Laurier moved a resolution asking that an imperial commission be appointed to go into and endeavour to settle amicably this great and vital question. This resolution of Sir Wilfrid's was passed by the conference, and shortly after returning to this country he appointed as the commissioner for Canada to inquire into this matter no less a person than Hon. P. C. Larkin, now Canadian High Commissioner in London. However, we had an election that fall, and a great disaster befell this country—the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier was defeated.

Mr. CHAPLIN: Another one is coming.

Mr. DUFF: Yes, and there will be more than one. There will be some after you and I are dead I am afraid. Although, as I said, the government was defeated, and although the nominee of the Liberal party, Mr. Larkin, did not enter on his duties on that commission, the matter was of such great importance that the government which followed that of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the government of Sir Robert Borden, decided to enter upon a consideration of it, and Sir Robert Borden, very wisely I think, appointed Sir George Foster, now Senator Foster, as his representative on that commission. The commission met but there was not very much done. The imperial authorities moved very slowly, like some great bodies in Canada, with the result that very little was done. Subsequently the matter came up again. In the spring of 1913, I think it was, the flour millers of this country came to the government with a complaint that the ocean steamship lines were charging too high a freight on their products, and the government of the day then appointed Sir Henry Drayton, the present member for West York, to investigate the question. I think we must all agree that the hon. gentleman, whose name I have just mentioned was very well qualified to go into an important matter of this kind, and that anything he said on this subject should receive the attention of this House. The hon. gentleman proceeded to London and, after investigating the conditions there and at other important centres where steamship lines were doing business, he set forth certain findings and made certain recommendations. While he realized that this was a very im-

[Mr. Duff.]

portant question and it was necessary that it should be dealt with carefully, not only in the interests of Canadian shippers but in the interest of steamship lines as well, still I think I am safe in saying that Sir Henry Drayton's report of that time found that there were certain grave grievances which should be remedied. The hon. gentleman is not the only one who has felt that way. Some three years ago, it will be remembered, at the demand—the insistent demand shall I say?—principally of hon. gentlemen representing the three prairie provinces, and perhaps with representations made by other hon. members, this government appointed a special committee of the House to go into this question, and the report of that committee is certainly very illuminating. Whilst I cannot agree with everything that committee said and reported, there is no doubt it was proved conclusively that there were certain agreements made with certain steamship companies which were not in the best interests of the shippers of Canada.

Perhaps I may be allowed here to make a personal reference, and that is to the effect that previous to the appointment of this committee and to the investigation which it made, I offered certain observations on this important matter. Hon. members who were in the House during the session of 1921 will remember that in the few remarks which I made in regard to the Canadian Government Merchant Marine I showed conclusively that the merchant marine was taking part in the meetings of what is known as the steamship conference, and while I did not know whether the rates set by this conference were excessive or not, nevertheless I stated at that time that in my opinion a steamship line owned and operated by any government should not sit in at a conference to fix rates on different articles. Even the hon. member for Burrard (Mr. Clark) in his speech the other day admitted that there was—shall I say?—a conference to fix rates, a combine. I do not want to be too hard on the steamship companies; indeed, I wish to say that these companies deserve a great deal of credit for what they have done for transportation, not only for transportation between Canada and Great Britain but for transportation on the seven seas of the world; and it seems to me that we should discuss this matter fairly and squarely and without doing anything which would unduly hurt these great companies. Personally I have a great deal of sympathy—shall I say natural sympathy?—for anybody who does business upon the great waters; and I think that any person who has either