

made the statement that foreign countries were ready to build ships in our yards, and approached the Government for the purpose of asking it to finance the operation. Well, since we have no statements except those that are before us, is not Parliament entitled to have that correspondence?

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: Yes; but I would say to my honourable friend that if the orders do not come the Government will not have to incur the obligation.

Hon. Mr. POWER: Honourable gentlemen, I do not presume to know enough about the matter which is now before the House to undertake to deal with the details of the Bill; I leave that to honourable gentlemen who are better informed; but the preamble of the Bill places the matter in a light in which I think it should be considered. The experience of Canada, as well as of other countries, is that it is not desirable that Governments should go into lines of business which can be transacted by private enterprise. We have taken hold of railroads, and we have now a fair idea of what the practical result of Canada's undertaking to run nearly all the railroads of the country is likely to be. And now, not satisfied with dealing with the railroads, it is proposed that the Government should interfere in the matter of shipbuilding. I know that some little time ago the Government did interfere, and there was perhaps some justification for the Government's undertaking to build ships at a time when the tonnage available for traffic was not at all equal to the traffic which offered; and, in order to relieve the traffic distress which arose in that condition of things, the Government undertook to build ships. While I thought that that was an excusable thing, I believe it was a mistake. If there was so great a demand for tonnage, private enterprise, if given time, would have met the demand.

Hon. Mr. GORDON: Does my honourable friend think that the risk of endorsing notes for ships is as hazardous as the risk of endorsing for the railroads?

Hon. Mr. POWER: I think the honourable gentleman has had sufficient experience to make him a little cautious about endorsing even the best-looking paper; and, if these foreign governments are anxious to have ships built in Canada, why do they not have them built by the shipbuilders who are engaged in the business? That is what I cannot see. I do not see why the Government of Canada should be called

upon to step in between the proposed buyer of tonnage and the people who build the tonnage.

The honourable gentleman from Rothesay (Hon. Mr. Domville) referred to the proposed effect of this legislation on the plant at St. John, N.B.; but in the city from which I come there is a private company at work building ships. That company employs three thousand men, and it does not seem to me to be the right thing for this Government to interpose itself between that company and the foreign government, if there is such, that desires to have a ship built. That is the way it strikes me—that if the tonnage is needed and the customers are there who are prepared to pay for it, the Government has no business to interfere; and, if there is no one able to pay for the building of ships, then the ships had better not be built.

Hon. Mr. FOWLER: When I first glanced over this Bill it struck me that it was a very good Bill indeed, a step in the right direction; that it tended to encourage shipbuilding in this country, providing a market for ship labour and for various materials that go to make up the ships. But when I heard the speech of one honourable member of this House, and observed the ominous silence of another honourable member, who very seldom misses an opportunity to enter into a debate, I began to think that there might be something behind all this that was not quite right. The honourable member for Rothesay intimated that the merger was behind all this legislation. The honourable member for De Lanaudière (Hon. Mr. Casgrain) has been conspicuous in this debate by his silence; therefore it would almost look as if there were some connection between the merger and this assistance to shipbuilding. If that be the case, I shall scan with suspicion the various sections of this Bill; but, if not, I will revert to my original opinion, that this measure is really in the interest of the country and should be passed.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: Just a moment, if I may, to answer the point raised by my honourable friend from Kings and Albert (Hon. Mr. Fowler). I can assure him that the thought that he has advanced is entirely without foundation. There were two or three means which might have been adopted to aid in preserving and promoting the shipbuilding industry of Canada. Other methods did not seem feasible. It did not seem desirable to bonus shipbuilding out-

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND.