

then arises, in what proportion may these various industries take advantage of these proposals? Can the cattle industry, for instance, derive any great advantage from these proposals? I do not think so, for the simple reason that the bulk of our cattle are shipped in a comparatively short season, a large portion of them being cross-fed stock, and the percentage of those cattle that could be carried on these ten vessels would thus be very, very small. So much for the cattle industry.

What about the grain industry? The amount of grain that could be carried by that number of vessels would be trifling, so trifling indeed as to be hardly worthy of consideration. And again, is grain suffering from the effects of the conference? I hardly think it is. If you take the grain rates charged on ocean transports during the last term of years, you will find that in each of those years there has been a great fluctuation as between the charges of one cargo and the charges of another. No stabilization of rates there. You will find, moreover, that the average increase since pre-war days has been comparatively small as compared with the increase in other lines of industry; and for another reason the very nature of the freight itself makes it impossible for it to be taken over by any combine. I am not relying upon the philanthropic intentions of a combine to safeguard any industry. I have not that high opinion of our steamship companies, valuable though they may be, that is possessed by our friend from Burrard (Mr. Clark), who felt that the shipping men themselves were of such high calibre and were so patriotic in mind that they would not, even if they could, take advantage of any conference; I am not suggesting that at all. But what I am suggesting is that the very nature of the freight, the fact that in many cases it is moved out as distress or ballast cargo, the fact that it is a class of freight that appeals to and can be carried by any tramp steamer that comes along, renders it impossible for any combine limited to liner freighters to effectively control grain rates.

Then what have we left? We have dairy products, fruit products, and some smaller products, which though smaller still form a very important part of our ocean traffic; and in these lines, I believe, it is quite possible that agriculture would receive its share of benefit. But I wish to point out this: One of the obvious reasons why rates are high is because we have so little return cargo; I think that is so obvious that it does not require stressing. Now why have we so little return cargo? One of the reasons is the fact that we have a tariff which places

a restriction on imports. And then what is the situation so far as our manufacturing friends are concerned? We have in this country a tariff placed there as a matter of public policy, but placed there in accordance with the wishes and desires of the manufacturers of this country, and held there because of their wishes and desires, and, as they express it, because of their interests. Through the operation of that tariff, indeed that is its purpose, the prices to the consumer at home are increased; and now we have the proposal that these same manufacturers shall receive a subsidy from the public treasury to remove from them the handicap placed there at their own request. It is a peculiar situation to my mind, and it is still more peculiar when you consider this effect; that the very same people who now pay the increased cost of goods at home will through taxation pay their share at least of that subsidy. I think it is a most peculiar situation. However, that is merely in passing. I have no intention of being diverted, as some hon. members have been diverted, into discussion of the tariff at this time, but I wished to point that out because in this connection it has a direct bearing on the question. I would also like in the same connection to point out, as has been done by other hon. gentlemen, that a logical method of increasing our return cargoes, and thereby decreasing the cost of ocean transport would be to substantially increase the British preference or to wipe out altogether the duties against British goods. I am quite certain that in taking such action the government would find themselves supported unanimously by the members with whom I am associated.

Now what other weaknesses may be apparent in the proposal of the government?—and in discussing this question let me say that I am endeavouring at least to express opinions that are sincere opinions. I am not endeavouring to make this a political issue. There is nothing that this country would so strongly resent as to have any member of parliament or any party in this House make of this tremendous issue a political football. There is nothing that would so redound against a member or a party as such tactics. This is a business question. It is a question which affects business solely. It is a question which can only be settled satisfactorily upon absolutely business grounds, and a question which can only be settled upon business grounds when we are in receipt of the necessary information upon which to act. In speaking on this question I am endeavouring, from my point of view to impress upon this House the objections which we honestly hold. We