The Case for the Control of INDIAN COASTAL TRAFFIC

— with the —

Opinions of the Indian Press and Indian Commercial Bodies on the Bill introduced in the LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

●●

BY

SIR ABDUL HALIM GHUZNAVI, KT., M.L.A.,

AND IN THE

COUNCIL OF STATE

BY

THE HON'BLE MR. P. N. SAPRU

●●

CONTENTS

A

BILL

TO

Control the Coastal Traffic of India.

Whereas it is expedient to encourage the development of an Indian Mercantile Marine;

And whereas for this purpose it is expedient to control unfair competition in the Coastal Traffic of India;

It is hereby enacted as follows:—

Short title, extent and commencement.

1. (*a*) This Act may be called the Control of Coastal Traffic of India Act, 193 .

(*b*) It extends to the whole of the coastal traffic of British India and of the continent of India.

(*c*) It shall come into force on such date as the Governor-General-in-Council may, by notification in the *Gazette of India*, appoint.

Measures to check unfair competition.

2. When the Governor-General-in-Council is satisfied from a complaint, report or otherwise that unfair competition exists in the coastal traffic of British India or of the continent of India, by the lowering of the usual rates of fare or freight or by the grant of rebates or other concessions in any way whatsoever, it shall, subject to the provisions of the Government of India Act, be lawful for him to prescribe, from time to time, by rules published in the *Gazette of India*, the minimum rates of fare or freight between any ports in India or to prohibit by notification published in the said Gazette the grant of any rebate or concession which in his opinion amounts to unfair competition.

Penalties.

3. Any person who in the opinion of the Governor-General-in-Council contravenes any such rule or prohibition shall be punished with fine which may extend to Rs. 10,000, and shall also be liable to be debarred from taking any ship into any port in India under the control of the Government of India or of any Provincial Government for such period or under such conditions as the Governor-General-in-Council may direct.

Explanation.—A person shall include any company or association or body of individuals whether incorporated or not.

Power to make rules.

4. The Governor-General-in-Council may, by notification, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act. In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely :—

(*a*) for the procedure for complaint against or report about unfair competition;

(*b*) for enquiry into such complaint or report;

(*c*) for the imposition of the penalty of refusal of entry of any ship into any port and for the enforcement thereof.

STATEMENT OF OBJECT AND REASONS

This Bill is intended to remove a possible impediment to the growth and development of the Indian Mercantile Marine. There is no question of any discrimination between British and Indian shipping. Past experience, however, shows that a well established powerful Company engaged in coastal traffic can easily put a new venture out of action by unfair competition, *e.g.*, rate-cutting, grant of rebates, etc. The fear of unfair competition deters

Indian capital being invested in coastal shipping. If the Governor-General-in-Council be given power to prevent such competition, the fear will be largely allayed and a new line of commercial activity may be opened out to Indians. By this Bill, power is given to the Governor-General-in-Council, when he is satisfied that unfair competition exists, to fix minimum rates of fare and freight or to prohibit the grant of rebates or other concessions which are calculated to reduce such minimum rates. Contravention of any rule prescribed by the Governor-General-in-Council or any direction given by him with regard to the grant of concessions is made punishable with fine or refusal of entry to an Indian port.

A. H. GHUZNAVI.
P. BANERJEA.
LAKSHMI KANTA MAITRA.
BAIJNATH BAJORIA.
VASUDEVA RAJAH.
HAJI ABDOOLA HAROON.
GHULAM HUSSAIN HIDAYATALLAH.
S. MURTUZA.
M. A. AZIM.
N. C. CHUNDER.
NILAKANTHA DAS.
FAZL-I-HAQ PIRACHA.
N. B. BHUTTO.
MUHAMMAD YAKUB.
SAMI VENCATACHELAM CHETTY.
N. B. KHARE.
GOVIND DAS.
N. V. GADGIL.
C. N. MUTHURANGA MUDALIAR.
M. GHIASUDDIN.
B. DAS.
K. NAGESWARA RAO.
ANUGRAH NARAYAN SINHA.
MOHD. AZHAR ALI.
GHULAM BHIK NAIRANG.
AMARENDRA NATH CHATTOPADHYAYA.
BHAI PARMA NAND.
SATYA NARAYAN SINHA.
MANGAL SINGH.
SIDDIQUE ALI KHAN.
BASANTA KUMAR DAS.
KRISHNA KANT MALAVIYA.
S. K. HOSMANI.
LALCHAND NAVALRAI.
SAMUEL AARON.
BADI-UZ-ZAMAN.
N. C. BARDALOI.
SHEODASS DAGA.
ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURY.
BHAGCHAND SONI.
T. S. S. RAJAN.
M. ANANTHASAYANAM AYYANGAR.

CASE
FOR
THE CONTROL OF INDIAN COASTAL TRAFFIC

1. It is not necessary to go into the whole history of Indian navigation and maritime activities in order to realise that India has a remarkable tradition in the matter of shipping. I would refer for instance to " A History of Indian Shipping " by Dr. Radha Kumud Mukerji among other works for the traditions and achievements of Indian maritime activity from the earliest times. But even after the advent of British rule in India, Indian shipbuilding and navigation were in a flourishing condition and numerous authorities could be cited to show the skill of Indian shipbuilders and Indian sailors as well as the strength and beauty of Indian-built ships. I could cite British authorities to show how British shipbuilders and shipping interests viewed the existence and competition of Indian-built and Indian-owned ships and what steps were taken to prevent the employment of Indian-built ships in the trade between England and India. I am mentioning all this in order to show that Indian shipping and shipbuilding industry had made great progress in the past and Indian navigators and sailors were known all over the world for their skill and endurance.

2. Since Britain was the pioneer in the industrial field and shipping, British shipping came gradually to control not only the trade between India and England but even the coastal trade of India itself. I believe the P. & O. Co. secured the mail contract for India in 1842, *i.e.*, nearly 94 years ago and the B. I. S. N. Co. first received a subsidy for the carriage of mails between Calcutta and Rangoon in 1853 from the East India Company and has been receiving it from the Government of India since 1863, *i.e.*, for the last 73 years. I need not point out that this subsidy was in the initial stages and even subsequently of great assistance to such shipping companies to build up their service in India. British shipping consequently established itself in Indian waters

and consolidated its position through its technical equipment, financial resources and direct and indirect political advantages.

3. Indian merchants also turned their attention to the coastal trade and several Indian companies tried to participate in the coastal trade despite various serious handicaps. Authoritative statistics are not available but it has been calculated that during the last 35 or 40 years more than 20 or 25 Indian shipping companies, whose subscribed capital aggregated to more than Rs. 20 crores have been compelled to close down mainly owing to the drastic and at times even unfair competition of the powerful non-Indian vested interests. It is perhaps not very well known that Mr. Jamshedji Tata, the pioneer of Tatas' Steel Industry, had also gone into the shipping industry but was forced to go out owing to the competition of British shipping companies. Mr. Walchand Hirachand, the present Chairman of the Scindia Steam Navigation Co. Ltd., which is one of the few Indian shipping companies that have survived on the Indian coast, mentioned in his evidence before the Indian Fiscal Commission and the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee that when the Scindia Co. first made its appearance in the Indian coastal trade in 1919-20, the current rate of freight on rice from Rangoon to Bombay which was in the neighbourhood of Rs. 18/- per ton was brought down by the B. I. to Rs. 6/- per ton although this was not at all an economic proposition and was less than the cost of operation involving a loss of nearly 200 per cent. Such instances can be multiplied *ad infinitum*. The Bengal Steam Navigation Co. and similar efforts at Tuticorin met with the same fate. The rate-war between the Bengal Burma Steam Navigation Co., and the B. I. S. N. Co. for carriage of passengers between Chittagong and Rangoon is recent history and some of the methods employed therein were brought to the notice of Lord Irwin (now Viscount Halifax) when, as the Viceroy, he presided over the Shipping Conference of 1930. I do not deny that some of the Indian shipping companies might have gone into liquidation owing to inexperience or inferiority in technical skill and meagre financial resources, but since shipping was and is an infant industry as also a key industry, all the arguments which justify protection to national and indigenous industries are applicable here. I might in this connection cite the views of a person like Sir Alfred

Watson, late Editor of the Calcutta *Statesman* who in his evidence before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament observed as follows :—

> " I recognise that Indian Company after Indian Company which endeavoured to develop a coastal service has been financially shattered by the heavy combination of the British interests. I think those British interests have to realise in the future that they must be prepared for a real partnership and must admit Indians to a share, at least a share, in their coastal trade."

I do not propose to go into all the details of the various methods employed by vested interests to oust and annihilate incipient Indian enterprises, but I might observe that only about half a dozen Indian companies have survived this competition and even they do not feel quite confident about their own future. As a result of a Resolution moved by Sir Sivaswamy Iyer in the Legislative Assembly, the Government of India appointed the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee to investigate the problem of development of Indian shipping and the Committee all but unanimously came to the conclusion that apart from provision for training facilities for Indian officers and engineers, the coastal trade of India should be reserved for shipping companies, the controlling interests in which are predominantly Indian. Since the Government were averse to act on this recommendation, non-officials introduced a bill to reserve the coastal trade of India to Indian-owned and Indian-managed shipping. This Bill passed its first reading by a large majority and was referred to the Select Committee. Before, however, it could reach its final stages, Government offered to bring about an amicable settlement of the various interests concerned through a Shipping Conference which was convened in January, 1930. I would mention here that the first item in the agenda of this Conference was increase of Indian tonnage operating on the coast of India and one of the methods to be considered for this was an agreement by which the Indian tonnage would increase gradually from year to year while simultaneously non-Indian tonnage was reduced. As this Conference proved abortive, the Government issued a communique on the 6th January, 1930, stating that " the

responsibility will rest with the Government of India of deciding what action should now be taken " in regard to the development of an Indian mercantile marine. Since that time Government have not taken any legislative or administrative action for achieving that object. I might add that Government spokesmen have repeatedly declared on the floor of the legislature and outside that they are in full sympathy with the widespread desire of Indians that India should possess a merchant fleet of its own. For instance, Sir Charles Innes, a Commerce Member, stated on the 19th March, 1926, as follows :—

> " We recognise that it is perfectly legitimate, perfectly natural, that the people of India should desire to have a mercantile marine of their own. We recognise also that the training of officers for the Indian mercantile marine is a very long process and that men who are trained for that career must have some reasonable prospect of an opening. We recognise further that Indian companies, as things are at present, have a difficulty in forcing their way into the coasting trade."

Similarly, Lord Irwin speaking at the annual session of the Associated Chambers of Commerce at Calcutta on 17th December, 1929, sympathised with the desire that " India should have its mercantile marine and that mercantile marine should be officered as well as manned by Indians." Sir George Rainey as Commerce Member also stated on the 23rd September, 1929, that the solution of the question of " an adequate participation of Indian shipping in the coastal and overseas trade of India " was the object of Government convening a conference of shipping interests. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer in his speech in the Assembly on the 7th September, 1932, when he was officiating as Commerce Member made the following statement of Government policy :—

> " That Government are particularly anxious to facilitate the growth and expansion of coastal trade of India in so far as that coastal trade is operated by Indian agencies and through the instrumentality of Indian capital."

Now what the public demand is that these declarations and statements of policy must be translated into tangible and concrete action.

4. I am aware of the action taken by the Government in regard to development of an Indian mercantile marine as stated in their replies to interpellations and during debates on the subject in the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State from time to time. I realise and appreciate that a good start has been made with the Training Ship " Dufferin " but it is evident that already the supply of qualified officers is exceeding the demand and this will be the case in regard to engineers also after they are trained unless Indian shipping develops correspondingly to absorb them. In other words, while I hope and trust that British shipping companies plying on the Indian coast and receiving mail subsidies and other assistance, directly and indirectly, will try and take in Indian cadets as apprentices, officers and engineers, I believe no final solution of the problem of employment of these boys can be arrived at without an adequate development of the Indian mercantile marine in the coastal and overseas trade of India. I also know that the Bengal Pilot Service is being steadily Indianised and trust the " Dufferin " cadets will also find employment in the various Port Trusts and Pilot Services of India. As regards the larger question of development of Indian shipping itself, Government representatives always refer to some working arrangements that have been arrived at between Indian and British shipping interests through a Tripartite Agreement between the British India, the Asiatic and the Scindia Steam Navigation Companies as well as to an award regarding the small Steamship Companies on the West Coast of India, by which practically all the existing Indian shipping companies have been admitted into the Coastal Conference. I also recognise that two purely Indian shipping companies are engaged in passenger traffic in the Bay of Bengal and that one of them is carrying the Royal Mails on the Arracan coast. I do not desire in the least to depreciate or minimise the efforts of the Commerce Member of the Government of India in persuading and pressing the British shipping interests to come to some kind of agreement with Indian interests but until the public are taken into confidence in regard to the circumstances which led to these agreements or the exact terms and conditions of these agreements, I, on my part, cannot pronounce any considered opinion on them. It is possible that circumstances beyond their control have compelled the Indian

interests to arrive at certain arrangement for preserving their very existence. I doubt, however, whether it redounds to the prestige of a powerful Government like the Government of India that they should not rely on their own wide powers to protect and promote Indian shipping but should prefer to try to persuade and appeal to British shipping interests to come to some arrangement with Indian shipping interests. While I do not underrate the necessity and desirability of a policy of friendly negotiations and co-operation, I think Indian shipping, like other national industries, is entitled to exist and develop on its own inherent right and not be allowed to live through the favour and grace of its competing interests. I, therefore, consider that Government should possess adequate powers themselves to prevent the annihilation of Indian shipping enterprise and to secure for it economic conditions of employment on the Indian coast.

5. As regards the development of Indian shipping, I learn from a statement laid on the table of the Legislative Assembly on the 9th April, 1936, that the total number of Indian steamers employed on the Indian coast was 63 with 1,36,000 tons gross while the number of British steamers was 87 with a total of 4,14,000 tons gross. In other words, the Indian-owned tonnage forms less than 20 per cent. of the total tonnage engaged in the coastal trade. I understand from a Resolution moved in the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce at its 8th Annual Session on 30th March, 1935, that the total quantity of cargo carried by Indian shipping companies on the Indian coast is round about 20 per cent. On the other hand, the share of Indian shipping in the overseas trade of India is nil despite the large volume and value of its foreign trade. I understand that the increase in the share of Indian shipping during the last 10 years has been hardly about 10 per cent. which is a progress of about 1 per cent. per annum and cannot by any means be considered satisfactory.

6. Reservation of the coastal trade of a country to its own nationals is a legitimate and recognised method of maritime protection. Apart from examples of other countries outside the British Empire, I would like to point out that Section 736 of the British Merchant Shipping Act 1894, confers power upon the

Legislature of a British Possession—and not only a Dominion—by any Act or Ordinance to regulate its coasting trade under certain stipulations. Full powers have, however, been given to the different units of the British Commonwealth to deal with their own shipping as a result of the Conference on the Operation of Dominion Legislation and Merchant Shipping Legislation held in London in 1929, at which India was also represented. In respect of India the Conference specifically made a mention of it in paragraph 124 and stated that " as the position of India in these matters has always been to all intents and purposes identical with that of the Dominions, it is not anticipated that there would be any serious difficulty in applying the principle of our recommendations to India and we suggest that this question and the proper method of doing so should be considered by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Government of India." It was in pursuance of this Conference, to which India was a party, that an agreement as to British Commonwealth Merchant Shipping (December 10, 1931) was signed empowering each part of the British Commonwealth to regulate its coastal trade. I might add, however, that India did not sign this Agreement although its name was originally included in the draft Agreement. I have to point out, further, that Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa have all been paying subsidies to shipping companies in respect of mail services both ocean and coastal, while Australia also reserved its coastal trade to vessels on the Australian Register. Mr. Walter Runciman, President of the Board of Trade, stated during the debate on the British Shipping (Assistance) Bill on 1st February, 1935 that " the Dominions have their own shipping policy which is nationalistic in character and they have not been very ready to harmonise their views with our own." I submit that these examples and observations show that the Dominions look upon their own shipping as national enterprise distinct from British shipping and they have the right and power to pursue a shipping policy suitable to their own interests.

7. How far India is entitled to take a similar view of her own shipping and to claim a right and power similar to those taken and exercised by the Dominions is a matter which need not trouble and detain us at present inasmuch as the powers conceded

to the Dominions under the recommendations of the Imperial Conference cannot be invoked by the Government of India owing to the provision of Chapter III, Part V of the Government of India Act, 1935. So far as India is concerned, British and Indian shipping must for the present be deemed to stand on the same footing. I would point out, however, that under the existing Government of India Act the Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill was considered *intra vires* of the Indian legislature by the Law Officers of the Crown who were twice consulted on the subject by the Government of India and that the Government of Bombay did not object to the principle provided the reservation was effected within a period of 25 years. In any event I consider that whatever the constitutional restrictions imposed by the new Government of India Act, 1935, they should not prevent Government from taking whatever action they consider necessary for developing indigenous and national industries. I have no doubt Section XIV of the Instruments of Instruction to the Governor-General and Governors would be interpreted in such a manner as to enable the Federal Legislature to develop its own economic policy in regard to Indian shipping along with other indigenous industries. In this connection I would also like to refer to the discussion which took place in the Joint Parliamentary Committee on this very issue when during the cross-examination of the Secretary of State for India Mr. Jayakar contended and the Secretary of State acknowledged in reply to the Archbishop of Canterbury that the Indian Legislature should have freedom and power to deal with abuses like rate-wars, etc. with which the present Bill deals by measures which may even look like discrimination. So the present Bill cannot be viewed as within the mischief of the provision against commercial discrimination contained in the Government of India Act, 1935. The Government and the Legislature must, therefore, devise ways and means of developing Indian shipping which, while not being inconsistent with the provisions of the new Government of India Act, would at the same time achieve the fundamental object without delay. Government reject the method of coastal reservation as well as of subsidies and bounties but they have no constructive or positive methods to fall back upon and when pressed for the enunciation of such a positive policy, they only

suggest the method of mutual adjustment and negotiation which is not a legislative or administrative method at all but one of using the good offices of the representatives of the Government of India as a means of pressure and persuasion. I submit that the Government should not rest content with such a tardy and haphazard method but should possess adequate powers to deal with such a situation. The precarious and uncertain method of persuasion and agreement renders Indian capital shy for employment in the development of mercantile marine. It is necessary for the establishment of confidence that the impartial authority of Government should be available to protect bonafide enterprises.

8. As a result of my own unfortunate experience just after the War in the shipping line in connection with a shipping company called " The Eastern Peninsular Steam Navigation Company " to which I made detailed reference in my speech on the Indian Finance Bill in the Legislative Assembly on the 23rd March, 1935, I have always taken an interest in the question of development of Indian shipping. The attempts of one or two companies during 1935 to cut into the Calcutta-Rangoon service showed me again that some measure was necessary to protect shipping ventures from being ousted and exterminated by unfair competition through rate-wars, etc. I, therefore, gave notice of the Bill, which I introduced in the Assembly on the 17th April last. Forty-two elected members of the Legislative Assembly belonging to all parties including the Congress Party appended their signatures to the Bill as evidence of their approval of it and the Bill has since received the unanimous support of the Indian press and several Indian commercial bodies. The object of this Bill is to encourage the development of an Indian mercantile marine and the method proposed is to remove an impediment to its existence, growth and development by making it impossible to carry on rate-wars with impunity in the future as in the past. As the Bill is still to be considered by the Central Legislatures and is likely to be referred to a Select Committee, I shall content myself at the present stage by stating that I am prepared to agree to any reasonable modification or amendment in the measure which would help to attain the objective without being contrary to the underlying principle, namely, the development of an Indian mercantile marine. I feel,

Reprinted from the Leader (Allahabad), 27th May, 1936.

MR. SAPRU'S COASTAL TRAFFIC BILL

According to a statement made in the House of Commons in mail week by the President of the Board of Trade, the principal countries in which the coasting trade is reserved to national vessels are France, Greece, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Turkey, Japan, and the United States of America; while Argentina, Brazil and Chile, whilst reserving their coasting trade to national vessels, permit foreign vessels to carry passengers from one port to another. If India to-day had a national government, there can be no doubt that she too would have followed the example of Japan, U. S. A. and the other countries mentioned above. How necessary in the interests of India such a policy was may be realized from the fact that it was the opinion of no less a body than the Mercantile Marine Committee which included among its members an ex-director of the Royal Indian Marine and a British naval architect, that for the development of an Indian merchant marine the establishment of a training ship was not enough, that what was wanted was the reservation of the coastal trade to Indian shipping. But our masters have ordained otherwise—as they have a knack of doing. Under the anti-India Act, which is supposed to hasten the advent of Swaraj, the Indian legislature cannot make any discrimination between ships owned by Indian companies and foreign companies, even in respect of the grant of subsidies, bounties, or any other form of state aid, to say nothing of excluding foreign ships from the coastal trade altogether.

Ever since the reformed councils came into existence, the Assembly has been urging the Government to come to the help of Indian shipping which requires immediate protection. We are on the eve of more 'reforms'. And yet, so far nothing substantial has been done. That is how the self-appointed trustees of India treat Indian wishes and Indian interests. Will the Government even now revise their policy? Here is an excellent opportunity for them to do a good turn to Indian shipping. In April last the

the Viceroy summed up succinctly the problem of Indian shipping in the following significant words :—

> " What is desired is to find, if possible, some measure which would effect an increase, a definite increase, in the number of Indian ships and a revision of conditions of their economic—if this is the right word—employment."

The problem, therefore, is not only to develop Indian shipping by removing all possible impediments in its way but to see that such shipping is employed economically both in the interests of shipowners and shippers.

10. In conclusion, I would deal briefly with some of the objections against the Bill urged by British Commercial and Shipping interests. It has been argued that although the statement of Objects and Reasons makes it clear that " there is no question of any discrimination between British and Indian shipping," the Bill will, in fact, operate to the detriment of non-Indian shipping interests engaged in the coastal trade as shown by the fact that the primary object of the Bill is " to remove a possible impediment to the growth and development of an Indian mercantile marine." I submit that the Bill is not discriminatory either in form or in fact because it will apply equally whether a British or an Indian shipping company carries on unfair competition. On the other hand, it is true that Indian shipping in the coastal trade, if it is to pay, will have to replace British tonnage and not merely add to the total tonnage. I would in this connection refer to the examination of Sir Samuel Hoare, the late Secretary of State for India, by Mr. M. R. Jayakar in the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, when Mr. Jayakar pointed out as follows :—

> " The most effective way for the Legislature would be by using some kind of discrimination to prevent this unfair competition. If we agreed that it is necessary that such unfair competition should be prevented, then the question is how to do it, and the easiest way would be to leave the Legislature freedom in the exceptional case to pass a measure which may look like discrimination. That is what I am suggesting to you, but what power is there to prevent such

unfair competition as I have submitted for your consideration?" (Vide question No. 15, 685).

The Archbishop of Canterbury also enquired in the same connection whether if the Legislature brought in some Bill to deal with this kind of abuses which Mr. Jayakar had mentioned, it would be open to the Governor-General to decide that that was not discrimination of the kind contemplated in these proposals and the Secretary of State agreed that that was so. I hold that since non-Indian shipping is engaged in the home waters of India, it would be virtually impossible to frame any legislation that would substantially protect and promote Indian shipping and not take into account the position of British shipping at all.

The second point that is attempted to be made out is that Indian shipping has developed remarkably during the last 13 years through a spirit of mutual trust and understanding and that legislation at this stage will interfere with the normal progress and is, therefore, undesirable. I have already dealt with the actual development of Indian shipping in recent years and I contend that it is hardly satisfactory in view of the fact that the coastal trade of India is admittedly its domestic preserve by every canon of international law, maritime practice and Imperial Shipping Legislation and Convention. Moreover, there is nothing to guarantee the advance of Indian shipping in the future especially in view of the rigid and stringent commercial safeguards which might prevent any effective action for its development. I contend as I have already stated that Government should not stoop down to methods of negotiations and even get rebuff in the process when they can wield and exercise authority and power for the protection of indigenous industries and implement their own declarations of policy.

It is next argued that the fixing of minimum rates is not a simple matter and may in practice be easily evaded. I recognise that it is so. I also recognise that the fixing of minimum rates is a complex matter and acknowledge that if shipping is to be paying, the minimum rate must be an economic rate and that it must depend on various factors and conditions which might

even fluctuate from time to time. I have no hesitation in stating that for the purpose of investigating and determining such rates suitable machinery will have to be set up and the shipping interests will have to be fully represented therein. As regards the argument about the evasion of law, no legislature could contemplate and no executive could permit a persistent evasion and breach of law and if any such wholesale evasion takes place, necessary steps could be taken to prevent any loopholes and ensure compliance with the provisions of the measure.

As regards the cutting of rates against opposition, it may be necessary to do so at present owing to the fact that the coastal trade of India is open to all incomers and that tramp tonnage and occasional charters interfere with the regular lines. If, however, a fair and economic rate of freight is guaranteed to the shipping companies through prevention of such outside and stray tonnage by issuing license as suggested above, I do not see why shipping should resort to rate-wars which are at times as harmful to shippers as to shipowners. I realise that shipping, especially during the present trade depression, is a precarious business and the resources of Indian shipping are more meagre than those of British shipping which can also make up their losses on the coastal trade through their earnings elsewhere. I would, therefore, make it clear that the lines which desire to participate in the coastal trade must be *bonafide* and they must have adequate capital and requisite technical experience. If new enterprises with inadequate resources are started merely with a view to harass or blackmail the existing regular lines which provide service, I am not in favour of encouraging them. It is only when and if the existing lines charge exorbitantly high rates or unduly low rates with a view to oust really bonafide competition or are unable to cater for a particular service or a particular port that Government should step in with a view to protect public interest and safeguard an indigenous industry.

This reply also meets another similar objection of the British commercial interests that the principle of minimum rate would deprive the British lines of the only recognised means of defending their business interests from the attack of all and sundry.

It is also contended by those who are acquainted with the conditions of coastal trade that the existing lines adequately meet the requirements of trade or would with a little addition to the existing tonnage be able to supply the requisite tonnage and that the advent of greater tonnage would be detrimental to the interests of existing lines. I am certainly not in favour of unlimited expansion of tonnage which might be particularly detrimental to Indian shipping interests and I have already suggested ways and means to check it by a system of licensing. I do not want to build up new, inefficient struggling shipping enterprises which will unduly affect the existing ones and not help the cause I have at heart. I would prefer that there should be a few strong and efficient shipping interests with healthy rivalry amongst them which will aid and assist shipping in these days of stress, strain and dwindling business rather than a number of them struggling inefficiently for their existence. What I do really want is the introduction into the coastal shipping enterprises of new blood in the shape of bonafide, financially strong Indian Companies with adequate experience and expert knowledge behind them which through resourcefulness, vigour, efficiency of management and reduction of unduly high overhead charges will be able to bring down their rates to a lower economic level so as to attract more business without at the same time seriously impairing their margin of profit.

I trust I have met fairly all the objections urged on behalf of the vested shipping interests engaged in the coastal trade of India and have made out a strong case in support of the Bill introduced in the Legislative Assembly by me.

A. H. GHUZNAVI.

[*Reprinted from the 'Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), dated 22nd May,* 1936.]

COASTAL TRAFFIC OF INDIA

A New Bill

We are publishing below in this issue the text of the "Bill to Control the Coastal Traffic of India" which was introduced by Sir A. H. Ghuznavi in the Legislative Assembly and the Hon'ble Mr. P. N. Sapru in the Council of State on the 17th April, 1936. This Bill, as explained in its Objects and Reasons, " is intended to remove a possible impediment to the growth and development of Indian Mercantile Marine. There is no question of any discrimination between British and Indian shipping. Past experience, however, shows that a well-established powerful company engaged in coastal traffic can easily put a new venture out of action by unfair competition, e.g., rate-cutting, grant of rebates, etc. The fear of unfair competition deters Indian capital being invested in coastal shipping. If the Governor-General-in-Council be given power to prevent such competition, the fear will be largely allayed and a new line of commercial activity may be opened out to Indians. By this Bill, power is given to the Governor-General-in-Council, when he is satisfied that unfair competition exists, to fix minimum rates of fare and freight or to prohibit the grant of rebates or other concessions which are calculated to reduce such minimum rates. Contravention of any rule prescribed by the Governor-General-in-Council or any direction given by him with regard to the grant of concessions is made punishable with fine or refusal of entry to an Indian port."

It is an important piece of legislation to which we invite public attention.

A Bill to Control the Coastal Traffic of India.

Whereas it is expedient to encourage the development of an Indian mercantile marine;

And whereas for this purpose it is expedient to control unfair competition in the coastal traffic of India :

It is hereby enacted as follows :—

SHORT TITLE, EXTENT AND COMMENCEMENT

1. (1) This Act may be called the Control of Coastal Traffic of India Act, 193 .

(2) It extends to the whole of the coastal traffic of British India and of the continent of India.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the Governor-General-in-Council may, by notification in the *Gazette of India*, appoint.

MEASURES TO CHECK UNFAIR COMPETITION

2. When the Governor-General-in-Council is satisfied from a complaint, report or otherwise that unfair competition exists in the coastal traffic of British India or the continent of India, by the lowering of the usual rates of fare or freight or by the grant of rebates or other concessions in any way whatsoever, it shall, subject to the provisions of the Government of India Act, be lawful for him to prescribe, from time to time, by rules published in the *Gazette of India*, the minimum rates of fare or freight between any ports in India or to prohibit by notification published in the said Gazette the grant of any rebate or concession which in his opinion amounts to unfair competition.

PENALTIES

3. Any person who, in the opinion of the Governor-General-in-Council, contravenes any such rule or prohibition shall be punished with fine which may extend to Rs. 10,000, and shall also be liable to be debarred from taking any ship into any port in India under the control of the Government of India or of any Provincial Government for such period or under such conditions as the Governor-General-in-Council may direct.

EXPLANATION :—A person shall include any company or association or body of individuals whether incorporated or not.

POWER TO MAKE RULES

4. The Governor-General-in-Council may, by notification, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act. In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely :—

(*a*) for the procedure for complaint against or report about unfair competition;

(*b*) for enquiry into such complaint or report;

(*c*) for the imposition of the penalty of refusal of entry of any ship into any port and for the enforcement thereof.

[*Reprinted from the Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), dated 23rd May, 1936.*]

PREVENTION OF RATE WARS.

We published yesterday the text of the Bill to control the coastal traffic of India, which has been introduced by Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi in the Legislative Assembly and by Mr. P. N. Sapru in the Council of State. This Bill will, we presume, come up for consideration during the Simla session of the Central Legislature and we trust Government by then would be in a position to declare precisely their attitude towards it. As mentioned in the statement of the objects and reasons of the Bill, the measure is intended to remove one of the impediments to the growth and development of an Indian mercantile marine through prevention of rate-wars and unfair competition on the Indian coast. It is well known that rate-wars have been the usual method of British shipping interests to oust and annihilate new Indian shipping companies, and it is, therefore, essential to find out some methods whereby this obstacle to the full development of Indian shipping could be removed. Since Government are averse to the reservation of the coastal trade of India to Indian shipping—and such a method would be presumably impossible under the new Constitution—it is incumbent on the Government to devise other ways and means of developing Indian shipping. For, the existence of the impediments cannot certainly be denied. We shall, in support of our contention that rate-wars have been resorted to to strangle Indian enterprises, quote the observations of no less a person than Sir Alfred Watson, the late Editor of the *Statesman*, who cannot surely be considered to be biassed against British shipping. In his evidence before the Joint Select Committee, Sir Alfred stated as follows :

> "I am bound to say, speaking as a European, that the Indians have a case for a large share in their coastal shipping and although I opposed the Bill (for Coastal Reservation) very strongly because it savoured of expropriation, I recognise that Indian Company after Indian Company which endeavoured to develop a coastal service has been financially shattered by the heavy combination of the British interests."

This will show what an unequal fight is being fought by Indian shipping companies for their very existence. Numerous instances could be mentioned from the history of coastal and inland navigation to show how in order to oust a competitive line not only were passengers carried free but handkerchiefs and sweets were offered as inducements. At the Second Round Table Conference, Mahatma Gandhi quoted the example of a shipping company run by some Chittagong Mahomedans on the Arracan Coast against which a rate-war was being waged by a powerful British combine. Indian shipping, therefore, has to face and struggle against unfair competition from the established powerful and resourceful British shipping companies and it is necessary to devise some means for the protection of national enterprises. This is what the Bill introduced by Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi and Mr. Sapru seeks to do and whatever differences there might be in regard to some of the details of the measure, there is no doubt that the Bill deserves the support and sympathy not only of the public but of the Government of India who have always professed their adherence to a policy of development of an Indian mercantile marine.

We wish to emphasize in this connection that the principle of fixing of minimum and maximum rates has already been approved by the Legislature and accepted by the Government of India in regard to inland navigation. Mr. K. C. Neogy's Bill to amend the Inland Steam Vessels Act, 1917, which is now on the Statute Book as Act XIII of 1930, enables the Governor-General-in-Council to fix maximum and minimum rates for passenger fares and freight for goods and provides for machinery for investigation of complaints of unfair competition in inland waterways. The present measure proposes that a similar principle should, at least as regards minimum rates, be accepted in the coastal waters and the Government must have legislative powers not only to investigate but to prevent such cases of unfair competition by penalising those who compete in such a manner. If, however, Indian shipping is to grow and develop, it needs protection not only against powerful British shipping interests but also against the opposition of outside tonnage. For instance, only about a couple of years ago, Indian

shipping companies lost heavily owing to the instrusion of Japanese tonnage in the coastal waters although the coastal trade of Japan itself is reserved for Japanese steamers only. It is, therefore, essential not only to prevent unfair competition in order to enable Indian shipping even to exist but it is necessary that Government should create conditions to enable it to grow and prosper in its home waters. Lord Irwin, presiding over the Shipping Conference in January, 1930, when he was the Viceroy, summed up the problem of Indian shipping in the following significant words:

> "What is desired is to find, if possible, some measure which would effect an increase, a definite increase, in the number of Indian ships and a revision of the conditions of their economic—if this is the right word—employment."

The question, therefore, is not only to develop Indian shipping by removing all possible obstacles in its way but to see that such shipping is employed economically both in the interests of ship-owners and shippers. Under the provisions of the Indian Coasting Trade Act V of 1880, the coasting trade of India is open to all comers. It was the unanimous opinion of the witnesses who appeared before the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee that the Act should be repealed with a view to the exclusion of foreigners from the coastal trade. The Indian Mercantile Marine Committee, therefore, recommended the introduction of a system of licences or permits in respect of the Indian coastal trade. At the Shipping Conference referred to above, it was also recognised that the expansion of Indian tonnage and the economic employment of ships engaged in the coast could only be effected by defining and restricting the total volume of tonnage on the coast through a system of licensing. The Government might, therefore, accept the present Bill as tending to remove one of the obstacles in the path of Indian shipping and should issue licences for ships engaged in the coastal trade of India so that the penalty for infringement of regulations regarding minimum rates should be the deprival of licence for the ship and the ship-owner concerned. We earnestly request the Government to judge this measure in its broad aspect as one

designed for the prevention of ruinous and unfair competition in the coastal trade of India and not split hairs as regards this word or that sub-clause in determining their attitude to the measure. Lord Linlithgow, the new Viceroy, has just commenced his career and is evincing a keen interest in agricultural development and rural uplift. We put it to him that unless India is to remain an Imperial Cinderella, a producer of food grains and raw materials relying on other nations for the performance of all the services and the satisfaction of all the needs of modern economic life, industry and agriculture should grow up simultaneously and harmoniously. Indeed, their development is, in several respects, correlative and agricultural development itself needs and demands a co-ordinated system of national transport.

[*Reprinted from the Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), dated 27th May, 1936.*]

ALLAHABAD, MAY 2(

At a meeting of the Committee of the U. P. Liberal Associatic held under the presidency of Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, th Committee accorded strong support to the *Coastal Traffic Bi sponsored by Mr. P. N. Sapru in the Council of State and by S A. H. Ghuznavi in the Assembly. The present Bill was, in th opinion of the Committee, more modest than Mr. Haji's Bill as only sought to protect Indian companies engaged in coastal traff from unfair means employed by powerful foreign companies.*– (A. P.).

[*Reprinted from the Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), dated 20th July,* 1936.]

A NATIONAL SHIPPING ENTERPRISE.

We welcome the news of a national shipping concern which is being organised and floated under the name and style of " The United Steam Navigation Co. Ltd."

To-day India has made many successful efforts in several directions but she has not yet participated in the mercantile shipping concern. This important and most resourceful concern is solely handled by foreign companies who are enjoying a practical monopoly earning thereby almost fabulous profits. To meet the demand of such an important source of our national asset, several men of wide repute and experience have risen to the occasion to lead the scheme to a success.

In order to guard the interest of the national shipping concern, Mr. P. N. Sapru and Sir Abdul Halim Guznavi laid down a bill of controlling unfair competition in the coastal traffic of India which is a clear and definite step forward in the advancement of Indian shipping.

The Directors of proved merit and renowned reputation have been selected from almost all the provinces of India and it is expected that it will prosper in no distant date.

[*Reprinted from Advance (Calcutta), dated 23rd May,* 1936.]

LEGISLATION AND SHIPPING.

In April last a Bill to control the coastal traffic of India was introduced in both Chambers of the Central Legislature, the Hon'ble Mr. P. N. Sapru being its sponsor in the Upper House and Sir A. H. Ghuznavi in the Lower. It may be taken up in the next session with what result it is difficult to predict at the present moment having regard to Mr. Haji's abortive effort to reserve coastal shipping to Indian companies. But experience has made the new sponsors of a national Shipping Bill wiser than Mr. Haji and in drafting their proposed legislation they have taken special care to bear in mind the provisions contained in section 115 of the Government of India Act of 1935 under which equality of treatment in law is guaranteed both to British and Indian shipping in this country. After the Round Table reaction to the Haji scheme the present measure is not a bad beginning, if somewhat subdued in tone and restricted in scope. In this matter the European business community seem to stand in need of a reminder that nothing is a more effective safeguard than goodwill and that nothing has destroyed that goodwill more effectively than the numerous legislative and administrative safeguards incorporated in the Act. Events will before long convince them that discriminatory action in some form or other would be clearly within the legal rights of the legislatures, for prohibition of discrimination on specific grounds as elaborated in section 115 is a definite intimation that discrimination on other grounds is licit. That section, for example, provides protection in respect of the ship, her master, officers, crew, passengers or cargo, but does it protect tonnage or the subscribed or authorised capital of a newly floated shipping company? If right men are in the right places, it will be a battle of wits and one need not be told that legal ingenuity may baffle the merchants' calculations on the counter and the skill of the imperially-minded British draftsmen. That however is a different story.

Coming back to the Bill in question, its avowed aim as explained in its Objects and Reasons is not to promote and encourage discrimination but to prevent it. As the authors of the Bill say, past experience has shown that a well-established powerful company engaged in coastal traffic can easily send a new venture into liquidation by unfair and cut-throat competition such as rate-cutting, grant of rebates, early tea and a sumptuous dinner to every passenger for nothing. The Bill seeks to confer power on the Governor-General-in-Council on clear evidence of unfair competition to prescribe by rules the minimum rates of fare or freight between ports in India or to prohibit the grant of any rebate or concession which, in his opinion, amounts to unfair competition. Any contravention of such rule or prohibition will be punishable with fine extending to Rs. 10,000 or with expulsion from any port under the Central Government or a Provincial administration for such period and under such conditions as the Governor-General-in-Council may direct. It gives him power, for the purposes of the measure, to lay down procedure as regards the filing and disposal of complaints as well as the enforcement of his rules and prohibitions in that regard. It is needless to add that inasmuch as the Indian Governor-General is immune from the jurisdiction of courts his rules and prohibitions or any action taken by him in pursuance of the Act will not be subject to any judicial review or control. It is essentially a measure of defence and a serious blunder would be committed if the panic-stricken spokesmen of European commercial interests lead opposition against it or if the Viceroy withholds his assent from it, if and when passed. European opposition will provoke bitter attacks on their vested interests which it would be very difficult to resist despite the safeguards in law and administration. The Viceroy's disallowance of completed legislation is offensive, especially in regard to a measure of this nature. We hope that the relations which are already badly strained will not be further embittered by thoughtless and unwise action. In this connection it is necessary to remind ourselves of the shipping arrangements which have been sought to be made within the Empire in order to secure uniformity of legisla-

[*Reprinted from Advance (Calcutta), dated 23rd May, 1936.*]

LEGISLATION AND SHIPPING.

In April last a Bill to control the coastal traffic of India was introduced in both Chambers of the Central Legislature, the Hon'ble Mr. P. N. Sapru being its sponsor in the Upper House and Sir A. H. Ghuznavi in the Lower. It may be taken up in the next session with what result it is difficult to predict at the present moment having regard to Mr. Haji's abortive effort to reserve coastal shipping to Indian companies. But experience has made the new sponsors of a national Shipping Bill wiser than Mr. Haji and in drafting their proposed legislation they have taken special care to bear in mind the provisions contained in section 115 of the Government of India Act of 1935 under which equality of treatment in law is guaranteed both to British and Indian shipping in this country. After the Round Table reaction to the Haji scheme the present measure is not a bad beginning, if somewhat subdued in tone and restricted in scope. In this matter the European business community seem to stand in need of a reminder that nothing is a more effective safeguard than goodwill and that nothing has destroyed that goodwill more effectively than the numerous legislative and administrative safeguards incorporated in the Act. Events will before long convince them that discriminatory action in some form or other would be clearly within the legal rights of the legislatures, for prohibition of discrimination on specific grounds as elaborated in section 115 is a definite intimation that discrimination on other grounds is licit. That section, for example, provides protection in respect of the ship, her master, officers, crew, passengers or cargo, but does it protect tonnage or the subscribed or authorised capital of a newly floated shipping company? If right men are in the right places, it will be a battle of wits and one need not be told that legal ingenuity may baffle the merchants' calculations on the counter and the skill of the imperially-minded British draftsmen. That however is a different story.

Coming back to the Bill in question, its avowed aim as explained in its Objects and Reasons is not to promote and encourage discrimination but to prevent it. As the authors of the Bill say, past experience has shown that a well-established powerful company engaged in coastal traffic can easily send a new venture into liquidation by unfair and cut-throat competition such as rate-cutting, grant of rebates, early tea and a sumptuous dinner to every passenger for nothing. The Bill seeks to confer power on the Governor-General-in-Council on clear evidence of unfair competition to prescribe by rules the minimum rates of fare or freight between ports in India or to prohibit the grant of any rebate or concession which, in his opinion, amounts to unfair competition. Any contravention of such rule or prohibition will be punishable with fine extending to Rs. 10,000 or with expulsion from any port under the Central Government or a Provincial administration for such period and under such conditions as the Governor-General-in-Council may direct. It gives him power, for the purposes of the measure, to lay down procedure as regards the filing and disposal of complaints as well as the enforcement of his rules and prohibitions in that regard. It is needless to add that inasmuch as the Indian Governor-General is immune from the jurisdiction of courts his rules and prohibitions or any action taken by him in pursuance of the Act will not be subject to any judicial review or control. It is essentially a measure of defence and a serious blunder would be committed if the panic-stricken spokesmen of European commercial interests lead opposition against it or if the Viceroy withholds his assent from it, if and when passed. European opposition will provoke bitter attacks on their vested interests which it would be very difficult to resist despite the safeguards in law and administration. The Viceroy's disallowance of completed legislation is offensive, especially in regard to a measure of this nature. We hope that the relations which are already badly strained will not be further embittered by thoughtless and unwise action. In this connection it is necessary to remind ourselves of the shipping arrangements which have been sought to be made within the Empire in order to secure uniformity of legisla-

tion and treatment and the deliberate negation by statute in the case of India of the principle of autonomy extended to some of its other component parts. Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Statute of Westminster have removed once for all British control over Dominion legislation both with territorial and extra-territorial effect and the Dominions are competent to enact laws repugnant to the laws of England or to the provisions of any existing or any future Act of Parliament in the United Kingdom.

In that view of the case shipping legislation, coastal or otherwise, in the Dominions is absolutely under their control, but an agreement was arrived at in 1931 in which an attempt has been made in part IV to secure equal treatment for each and every part of the British Commonwealth. It has however been laid down in the agreement itself that nothing therein shall be deemed to derogate from the right of every part of the Commonwealth to impose customs tariff duties on ships built outside that part or to restrict the right of the Government of each part of the Commonwealth to give financial assistance to ships registered in that part or its right to regulate the sea-fisheries of that part. It is also provided that each part of the Commonwealth will have power to regulate its own coasting trade. This agreement was inspired by an anxiety to see that British shipping is not afforded less favourable treatment than foreign shipping within the Commonwealth. It was not contemplated to affect in any way the autonomy of the Dominions in respect of their shipping laws or laws, rules and regulations relating to coastal trade. It is however perfectly clear that, apart from its unrestricted autonomy in this behalf, no Dominion could in practice, as Professor Keith points out, impose on foreign ships the restrictions which it can impose on British ships, since, as exporting countries in great need of markets, the Dominions are singularly sensitive to retaliatory measures in the form of tariff surcharges. As a matter of fact, no Dominion has promulgated legislation to give effect to the agreement with the singular exception of the Dominion of Canada whose Shipping Act of 1934 was a move in that direction. No one familiar with the trend of commercial opinion on merchant shipping legislation in Australia or

New Zealand during the last twenty-five years or with legitimate Indian aspirations will feel the slightest confidence in the ideal of the agreement, although it was not a measure intended in any way or to the slightest extent to restrict the law-making powers of the Dominions.

[*Reprinted from Advance (Calcutta), dated 28th May,* 1936.]

INDIAN MERCANTILE MARINE

(SPECIAL FOR " ADVANCE ")

I notice from the press that Sir A. H. Ghuznavi and Mr. P. N. Sapru have introduced a Bill in the Assembly and the Council of State to prevent unfair competition by rate wars, with a view to encourage the development of an Indian mercantile marine. It is obvious that no attempts to create and develope an Indian mercantile marine can possibly succeed until fair competition is allowed to come into play. Indian witnesses before the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee were unanimous in their opinion that one of the most important conditions which militated against the development of Indian shipping was the keen, and at times unfair, competition carried on by British shipping companies against new Indian enterprises. It was stated that powerful vested interests quoted rates even below the cost in order to drive out the competing Indian companies. It was, therefore, suggested that rate-cutting to kill competition should be declared against public policy and made illegal. It was proposed by several witnesses that a Tribunal should be established to consider such complaints of unfair competition. I trust that suitable machinery would be provided in the new Bill to hear complaints, sift evidence and determine whether unfair competition is being carried on. Such a principle has already been recognised in regard to inland navigation through Mr. K. C. Neogy's efforts and there is no reason why Government should not accept a similar principle in coastal navigation.

Numerous illustrations could be given of the manner in which unfair competition has been carried on to the detriment of indigenous industries. It has been calculated that during the last 40 years more than 25 shipping companies whose subscribed capital aggregated to more than Rs. 20 crores have been compelled to go into liquidation and most of them were forced to close down owing to severe rate-cutting. It is not perhaps very well known that Mr.

Jamshedji Tata, the pioneer of Tatas' steel industry, had also gone into the shipping trade but was forced to go out owing to the competition of British shipping companies. Mr. S. N. Haji states in his "Economics of Shipping" that when the Scindia Steam Navigation Co. first made its appearance in the Indian coastal trade in 1919-20, the current rates of freight on rice from Rangoon to Bombay which were in the neighbourhood of Rs. 18 per ton were brought down by the British India Steam Navigation Co. to Rs. 6 although this was not at all an economic proposition and was less than the cost of operation. It meant a loss of nearly 200 per cent. Such instances can be multiplied *ad infinitum*. The main object of such a rate-war is evident. It is to oust the outsider competing on the same route through superior financial resources of the more powerful combine, which subsequent to elimination of competition can enhance the rates as it chooses.

The method proposed and embodied in the Bill to check unfair competition is by prescribing minimum rates of freight between ports in India and prohibiting undercutting and under-quoting of such rates through grant of private rebates or concessions. The difficulty of knowledge in regard to private rebates or concessions is patent and cannot be completely overcome by any legislation. The Bill, however, might prove valuable in that the very existence of such a measure on the Statute Book is apt to serve as a check on those who resort to unfair practices and might also be useful in mobilising public opinion against those who adopt such practices through impartial investigation and wide publicity. Clause II of the Bill, which is the principal clause, lays down measures to check unfair competition through lowering of usual rates of fare or freight. The term "usual rates of fare or freight" means a reasonable or equitable rate and is not so vague as at first it might appear. Although a scientifically precise rate cannot perhaps be arrived at in every case, it is possible to recognise and charge a reasonable rate that will be in the interests of both the shippers and shipowners. Reasonable rates, according to Prof. Taussig, should not be generally speaking higher than will be sufficient to yield a "normal" return on the capital invested,

" normal " return being understood to include not only interest but something in addition by way of compensation for risk and judgment. The adoption of " reasonable " rates by law is not unknown in Railway Acts and such a proposal has also been made in regard to shipping rates on the Indian coast from time to time.

It is necessary to emphasise, however, in this connection that while, on the one hand, there is the danger of monopoly of a few shipping companies preventing all fair competition, there is the opposite risk of the coastal trade being flooded by more tonnage than is required by trade. Already it is the considered opinion of those who are in the Indian coastal trade that there is over-abundance of tonnage and if the total volume of tonnage is not defined and restricted to meet trade requirements, it is hardly possible for Indian shipping to pay its way, much less to consolidate and build up itself. Rationalisation of shipping, for which schemes are now being evolved in England and elsewhere is nothing but the adjustment of supply of tonnage to the demand of trade. Shipping in the coastal trade also requires economic employment and it is essential that a scheme of licensing of tonnage on the coast should form an integral part of the Bill to control the coastal traffic if that Bill is to serve its fundamental purpose and realise its object, namely the development of an Indian mercantile marine.

[*Reprinted from Ananda Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), dated 30th May,* 1936.]

উপকূলে জাহাজ ব্যবসায়

ভারতবর্ষের বিশাল সমুদ্রোপকূলে ভারতীয় জাহাজ 'হালে পানি পাইতেছে না', কারণ এই উপকূল ভারতীয়গণের জন্য সংরক্ষিত নহে। ভারতের রাষ্ট্রীয় পরাধীনতা যেমন আধুনিক রাজনৈতিক জগতে নিতান্ত লজ্জার, তেমনই উহার অঙ্গীভূত বহুপ্রকার অর্থনৈতিক দুঃখের মধ্যে সিন্ধুতীরে ভারতীয়ের অধিকার-শূন্যতাও অনুরূপ বেদনার। পৃথিবীর সমুদ্রতীরবর্ত্তী উন্নত রাজ্যগুলির মধ্যে বোধ হয় ভারতবর্ষই একমাত্র দেশ, যাহার উপকূলে ভারতবাসীরা কূল হারাইয়াছে। কিছুদিন পূর্ব্বে বৃটিশ পার্লামেণ্টে বোর্ড অব ট্রেডের সভাপতি যে বিবৃতি দিয়াছিলেন, তাহাতে দেখা যায় যে, একমাত্র আর্জ্জেনটিনা, চিলি ও ব্রাজিল ব্যতীত পৃথিবীর বাকি বড় বড় দেশগুলির উপকূলভাগই স্বদেশীয় নৌপোতসমূহের জন্য সংরক্ষিত। দক্ষিণ আমেরিকার ঐ তিনটি দেশেও উপকূল-বাণিজ্যের একমাত্র অধিকার স্বদেশীয় পোতসমূহের; তবে তাঁহারা কোন কোন বিদেশী কোম্পানীকে এক বন্দর হইতে আর এক বন্দরে কেবল যাত্রী বহনের অধিকার দিয়াছেন। সুতরাং দেখা যাইতেছে, একমাত্র ভারতবর্ষই দুর্ভাগা দেশ যাহার সুদীর্ঘ উপকূল বিদেশীর নিকট সম্পূর্ণ মুক্ত। কিন্তু ভারতের এই অবারিত সিন্ধুকূল জাতীয় দাক্ষিণ্যের পরিচায়ক নহে, বরং জাতীয় দৈন্যেরই পরিচায়ক। এই দৈন্য হইতে ত্রাণ পাইবার জন্য বহু বৎসর ধরিয়া আন্দোলন হইতেছে—ব্যবস্থা পরিষদের প্রথম প্রবর্ত্তন হইতে আজ পর্য্যন্ত গবর্ণমেণ্টের নিকট বহু আবেদন নিবেদন ও বাদ-প্রতিবাদ উত্থিত হইয়াছে। নয় বৎসর পূর্ব্বেকার হাজির উপকূল বিলে গবর্ণমেণ্ট যেমন গররাজী ছিলেন, আজও তাঁহাদের মেজাজ তেমনই বজায় আছে। বরং ভবিষ্যতে যাহাতে স্বদেশীয় ষ্টিমারসমূহের উদ্গীর্ণ ধূমে বিদেশীয় নৌ-ব্যবসায়ীদের চক্ষু বাষ্পাচ্ছন্ন না হয়, তজ্জন্য দয়াময় বৃটিশ কর্ত্তৃপক্ষ ইণ্ডিয়া এ্যাক্টে এমন নিখুঁত নিরপেক্ষ নীতি করিয়াছেন যে, আমাদের সওদাগরী জাহাজ তীরের কাছে ডুবিয়া মরিলেও ৭ হাজার মাইল দূর হইতে আগত বৃটিশ বাষ্পীয় পোতসমূহ অনায়াসে সমুদ্রের শিঙ্গা ফুঁকিতে পারিবে। বাণিজ্যে বৈষম্যনীতি চলিবে না, ইণ্ডিয়া

এ্যাক্টের ইহাই মহৎ বিধান এবং এই বিধান এমন কৌশলে রচিত হইয়াছে যে, স্বদেশীয় কোম্পানীসমূহ কোনকালেই ঐশ্বর্য্যশালী বৃটিশ সওদাগরদের সহিত লড়িতে পারিবে না। ফলে, ভারতের উপকূলে দাঁড়াইয়া ভারতবাসীর পক্ষে একমাত্র সমুদ্র-লহরী গণনার অধিকার রহিল।

তথাপি ব্যবস্থা পরিষদে স্যার আবদুল হালিম গজনবী এবং রাষ্ট্র পরিষদে মাননীয় মিঃ পি এন সপ্রু একটি নূতন বিল পেশ করিয়া "কোষ্টাল ট্রাফিক" ব্যাপারে এখনও কিঞ্চিৎ সুবিচারের প্রত্যাশা করিতেছেন। গত এপ্রিল মাসের দিল্লী অধিবেশনে তাঁহারা যে বিলটি পেশ করিয়াছেন, ব্যবস্থা ও রাষ্ট্র পরিষদের আগামী সিমলা অধিবেশনে তাহার আলোচনা উঠিবে। এই বিল অত্যন্ত নির্দ্দোষ প্রকৃতির —ইহাতে উপকূলভাগ কেবল ভারতীয় জাহাজ ব্যবসায়ীদের জন্য সংরক্ষিত করার কোন প্রশ্ন নাই। (এবং তেমন প্রশ্ন উঠাও সম্ভব নহে)। কোন প্রকার বৈষম্যমূলক ব্যবস্থারও ইহাতে পরিকল্পনা নাই;—বরং বৈষম্য যাহাতে নিবারিত হয়, তেমন ব্যবস্থা অবলম্বনেরই তাগিদ রহিয়াছে। এই বিলের মর্ম্ম এই যে, ভারতের উপকূলে কোন জাহাজ কোম্পানী কোনপ্রকার অসঙ্গত প্রতিযোগিতা করিতে পারিবে না। যদি গবর্ণর জেনারেল বুঝিতে পারেন যে, তেমন কোন অসম প্রতিযোগিতা অনুষ্ঠিত হইতেছে—তবে তিনি সর্ব্বনিম্ন ভাড়ার হার বাঁধিয়া দিতে পারিবেন এবং 'রিবেট' বা অন্য কোন প্রকার সুবিধা দানও রোধ করিতে পারিবেন। এই দেশে বৃটিশ জাহাজ কোম্পানীসমূহ স্বদেশী কোম্পানীগুলিকে অঙ্কুরে বিনষ্ট করিবার জন্য কি ভাবে ভাড়া হ্রাসের সংগ্রামে বারংবার অবতীর্ণ হইয়াছে, তাহা সর্ব্বজনবিদিত। এই সেদিনও চট্টগ্রাম হইতে আকিয়াবের সমুদ্র পথে, কলিকাতা হইতে রেঙ্গুণের বন্দরে এবং করাচী হইতে বোম্বাই পর্য্যন্ত সিন্ধুকূলে অপরিমেয় শক্তিশালী বৃটিশ নৌ-ব্যবসায়িগণ ভারতীয়দিগের জাহাজ ব্যবসায়কে বিনষ্ট করিবার জন্য ভাড়া হ্রাসের, এমন কি বিশেষ বিশেষ ক্ষেত্রে যাত্রিগণকে বিনামূল্যে 'মিষ্টিমুখ' করাইবার ব্যবস্থা পর্য্যন্ত অবলম্বন করিয়াছিলেন। স্যার এ এইচ গজনবীর বিল, এই অসম প্রতিযোগিতা রোধ করিবার জন্যই গবর্ণর জেনারেলকে ক্ষমতা অর্পণ করিতেছে;—যদিও আমরা জানি এই বিল গৃহীত হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা কম এবং গৃহীত হইলেও বৃটিশ কোম্পানীর প্রতিযোগিতা ক্ষেত্রে বড়লাট তাঁহার ক্ষমতা

Reprinted from Ananda Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), 30th May, 1936.

প্রয়োগ করিবেন, এমন সম্ভাবনা আরও কম। ভারতের নদীপথগুলিতে অবশ্য এই প্রকার আইনের ব্যবস্থা আছে। ১৯৩০ সালের সংশোধিত ইনল্যাণ্ড ষ্টীম ভেস্‌লস্ এ্যাক্ট অনুসারে সপারিষদ গবর্ণর জেনারেল ভারতের জলপথসমূহে যাত্রী ও মালবহনের সর্ব্বনিম্ন এবং সর্ব্বোচ্চ ভাড়া নির্দ্দেশ করিতে পারেন এবং অসঙ্গত প্রতিযোগিতার ক্ষেত্রে তদন্ত ও প্রতীকার ব্যবস্থাও করিতে পারেন। ভারতের নদীপথগুলিতে যদি এই প্রকার বিধি সম্ভব হইতে পারে, তবে উপকূলের সমুদ্র পথেও অনুরূপ ব্যবস্থা সম্ভব হইবে না কেন? বিশেষতঃ এই আইন পাশ হইবার পর বৃটিশ জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলিকে ভারতবর্ষ হইতে পাততাড়ি গুটাইতে হইবে, এমন কোন সম্ভাবনাও নাই। ভারতের নদীপথে এখনও বৃটিশ ব্যবসায়ীদের প্রাধান্য অক্ষুণ্ণ আছে এবং উপকূলভাগেও যে ইহা অধিকতর শক্তিশালী থাকিবে, তাহাতে বিন্দুমাত্র সন্দেহ নাই। প্রকৃতপক্ষে ভারতের জাহাজ ব্যবসায় এখনও শৈশব অবস্থায় রহিয়াছে এবং এই শিশুকে বৃটিশ গবর্ণমেণ্ট ও বৃটিশ বণিকগণ মিলিয়া এমন সতর্কতা ও কৌশলপূর্ণ নিষেধবিধির মধ্যে রাখিয়া দিয়াছেন যে, কাব্যের ভাষায় বলা যায় যে, এই শিশু সমুদ্রতীরে কেবল ঝিনুক লইয়া খেলা করিতেছে—আর বিদেশীয় বণিকগণ মুঠি মুঠি ধনরত্ন আহরণ করিয়া সপ্তডিঙ্গা সাজাইতেছে।

[*Translation of the Bengalee article in the "Ananda Bazar Patrika," the leading Bengalee Daily, Calcutta, 30th May, 1936.*]

SHIPPING INDUSTRY ON THE COAST.

The reason why Indian shipping fails to have a firm footing in the vast Indian coasts is that the coast-line is not reserved for Indians. As the political dependence of India is a matter of shame in the modern political world, so also the helpless condition of the Indians on the Indian coast, no less than other economic disabilities, is painful. India is probably the only country among the advanced countries of the world, whose coast-line is not reserved to Indians. Some time ago, the President of the Board of Trade made a statement in the British Parliament that all the big countries except Argentine, Chile and Brazil, have reserved their coasts for their own national ships. Even these three South American States have reserved the sole right of trade in their coasts for their own ships. Of course, they allow some foreign shipping concerns to carry passengers only from one port to another. We find that India is the only unfortunate country whose extensive coast-line is open to foreigners. But this is not a sign of our National broad-mindedness; on the contrary, it proves the wretched condition of our nation. Since many years, efforts are being made to get rid of this wretched condition—and since the inauguration of the Legislative Assembly, Government have repeatedly been approached with many requests and protests and Government have the same view which they had regarding Haji's Coastal Trade Reservation Bill, nine years ago. On the other hand, in order to avoid all possible danger to foreign shipping merchants from the Indian side, the British Government have very neatly and impartially arranged in the India Act that British ships can carry on their trade easily in the Indian Ocean even at the ruin of Indian shipping industry. That "discriminatory treatment cannot be made in trade" is a noble precept in the India Act and this law has been made in such a skilful way that Indian shipping concerns can at no time compete with the well-financed British firms. Conse-

quently, only the right of counting the waves of the ocean is left to the Indians. Nevertheless, Sir A. H. Ghuznavi and the Hon'ble Mr. P. N. Sapru are expecting better justice from the Government in the matter of coastal traffic and with this view both of them have introduced a new Bill in the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State respectively. The Bill which they introduced in the Delhi session, held in the month of April last, will be discussed at the ensuing Simla session of the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. This Bill is of a harmless character. It does not raise the question of the reservation of the coast for Indians alone (and such question is not at all possible), neither does it prescribe for any discriminatory treatment; on the contrary, it insists on the Government to stop such treatment in trade. The sum and substance of this Bill is that no shipping concern can carry on unfair competition on the Indian coast. If the Governor-General comes to learn that such unfair and improper competition is carried on, he can then fix the lowest freight and can even stop the grant of all sorts of privileges such as rebates and the like. It is well known how British shipping firms have, so many times, carried on freight wars, in which they lowered the freights appreciably only with a view to ruin Indian shipping concerns. Recently, in order to destroy the Indian shipping industry between Chittagong—Akyab, Calcutta—Rangoon and between Karachi—Bombay, British shipping interests have not only lowered the passage fares but also made arrangements for refreshing the passengers free of charge. Sir Ghuznavi's Bill authorises the Governor-General only to prevent such unfair competition, although we are doubtful about the passing of this Bill and if passed we are still more doubtful that the Governor-General will exercise his authority in case the competition is carried on by British shipping firms. Of course, we have this law in existence so far as Inland traffic of India is concerned. According to the Inland Steam Vessels Amendment Act of 1930, the Governor-General-in-Council can fix the lowest and the highest charges for passengers as well as cargoes in the Inland waters of India and

can also make enquiries and take steps in case unfair competition arises. If this arrangement is possible in the Inland traffic, then why is the same not possible in the coastal traffic? British shipping concerns have no reason to fear that they would lose their hold in the coast if this Bill is passed. The predominance of British firms in the Inland traffic of India still remains unaffected and we have no doubt that their predominance will also remain so in the coast-line. Strictly speaking, Indian shipping industry is still in its infancy and this infant is chained by rules and regulations so carefully and skilfully devised by the British Government and the British merchants combined that this infant may be said to have been playing with oysters on the sea-shore while the foreign merchants are loading their ships with gold.

[*Reprinted from the Ananda Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), dated 11th June,* 1936.]

জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ে ভারতবাসী

[বাণিজ্য-সম্পাদক]

ভারতবর্ষে বাণিজ্যব্যপদেশে পাশ্চাত্য জাতিসমূহের শুভাগমনের পূর্ব্বে জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ে ভারতবাসী যে পৃথিবীর উন্নত দেশগুলির সমকক্ষ ছিল, তাহা অধ্যাপক রাধাকুমুদ মুখোপাধ্যায় মহাশয়ের "ভারতীয় জাহাজ শিল্পের ইতিহাস" নামক পুস্তকে সবিস্তারে বর্ণিত হইয়াছে। প্রাচীন কাল হইতে উনবিংশ শতাব্দীর প্রথম ভাগ পর্য্যন্ত ভারতীয় জাহাজেই বিদেশে ভারতীয় পণ্যদ্রব্যের আমদানী-রপ্তানী হইত। ভারতে ইংরাজ জাতির আগমনের পরেও ভারতীয় জাহাজসমূহ মালপত্র লইয়া ইংলণ্ডের টেমস নদীতে নোঙ্গর করিত। বিগত ১৮০০ সালে তদানীন্তন বড়লাট তাঁহার রিপোর্টে জানান যে, কলিকাতা বন্দর হইতেই ভারতে নির্ম্মিত ১০ হাজার টনের জাহাজ ইংলণ্ডে মালপত্র বহন করে। তখনকার দিনে ভারতে প্রস্তুত কাঠের জাহাজগুলি ইংলণ্ডে প্রস্তুত জাহাজ অপেক্ষা উৎকৃষ্ট ছিল। মিঃ মোরল্যাণ্ড বলেন যে, আকবরের সময়ে ভারতীয় জাহাজগুলিই বিদেশে অধিকাংশ ভারতীয় মালপত্রের আমদানী-রপ্তানী করিত। তাঁহার মতে ঐ সময়ে ভারতবাসীর এত বড় বড় জাহাজ সমুদ্রপথে যাত্রী লইয়া যাতায়াত করিত যে, ইউরোপে একমাত্র পর্ত্তুগীজদের ছাড়া আর কোন জাতির এত বড় জাহাজ ছিল না। তারপর ইউরোপে কাঠের পরিবর্ত্তে ইস্পাত নির্ম্মিত এবং পালের পরিবর্ত্তে যন্ত্রচালিত জাহাজের আবিষ্কার হয়। এদিকে ভারতবর্ষেও ক্রমে ইংরাজ প্রভুত্ব সুপ্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। বৃটীশ গবর্ণমেণ্ট তখন ইংলণ্ডে প্রচলিত একাধিপত্যমূলক নেভিগেশন আইন ভারতে বলবৎ করেন এবং ভারতে বৃটিশ জাহাজ কোম্পানীর প্রতিষ্ঠার উদ্দেশ্যে বৃটিশ কোম্পানীকে অর্থসাহায্য দেওয়া হইতে থাকে। এই সব কারণে ভারতীয় জাহাজী ব্যবসায় ও জাহাজ নির্ম্মাণ শিল্প সমূলে বিনষ্ট হয় এবং কি বিদেশের সহিত, কি উপকূলবর্ত্তী বন্দরসমূহে, কি দেশের অভ্যন্তরস্থ নদীপথসমূহে—সর্ব্বত্র বাণিজ্যে ও যাত্রীবহনে বৃটিশ জাহাজ কোম্পানীর একাধিপত্য প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়।

Reprinted from the Ananda Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), 11th June, 1936.

বর্ত্তমানে ভারতের উপকূলবর্ত্তী বন্দরসমূহের মধ্যে বৎসরে ৫০ লক্ষ টন এবং বিদেশের সহিত ভারতবর্ষের ১ কোটী ২০ লক্ষ টন মালপত্র আদান প্রদান হয়। এই সব মালপত্রের মধ্যে উপকূল বাণিজ্যের শতকরা মাত্র ২৩·৭ ভাগ ভারতীয় জাহাজের করতলগত; বাকী ৭৬·৩ ভাগই বিদেশী জাহাজ কর্ত্তৃক অধিকৃত। বিদেশের সহিত বাণিজ্যে যে ১ কোটী ২০ লক্ষ টন মালপত্র আমদানী-রপ্তানী এবং যে সব যাত্রী চলাচল হয়, তাহার মধ্যে এক টন মালও এবং একজন যাত্রীও ভারতীয় জাহাজ বহন করে না। দেশের অভ্যন্তরে নদী-সমূহে যে সব জাহাজ যাত্রী ও মাল বহন করে, তাহারও অধিকাংশ বিদেশী জাহাজেরই অধিকৃত। মিঃ হাজী তাঁহার প্রণীত "জাহাজের অর্থনীতি" নামক গ্রন্থে হিসাব করিয়া দেখাইয়াছেন যে, ভারতের বাণিজ্যে এবং যাত্রী-বহনে সমস্ত জাহাজের বৎসরে ৫৭ কোটী টাকা আয় হয়। উহার মধ্যে বিদেশী জাহাজ কোম্পানীই বৎসরে ৫০ কোটী টাকা পাইয়া থাকে। উহার মধ্যেও দেশের অভ্যন্তরে নদীপথসমূহে বিদেশী জাহাজ কোম্পানীর যে আয় হয়, তাহা ধরা হয় নাই; সুতরাং জাহাজী ব্যবসায় বিদেশী কর্ত্তৃক ভারতবর্ষকে শোষণের একটা কত বড় পথ, তাহা বুঝা যাইতেছে।

কেবল তাহাই নহে—জাহাজী ব্যবসায় বিদেশীর করতলগত থাকার দরুণ ভারতীয় বাণিজ্য ও বীমা ব্যবসায়ের বিষম ক্ষতি হইতেছে। বিদেশী জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলি তাহাদের ভারতীয় ব্যবসায়ে বর্ত্তমান মন্দার পূর্ব্ব পর্য্যন্ত প্রত্যেক বৎসর নিয়োজিত মূলধনের উপর শতকরা বার্ষিক ২০ টাকা হারে লভ্যাংশ অর্জ্জন করিয়াছে। উহা হইতেই বুঝা যায় যে, ভারতীয় মালপত্র বহনের কাজে উহারা অত্যধিক ভাড়া আদায় করিয়া ভারতীয় রপ্তানী বাণিজ্যের ক্ষতি এবং ভারতে বিদেশী মাল আমদানীর পথ প্রশস্ত করিয়াছে। দ্বিতীয়তঃ, বিদেশী জাহাজবীমা কোম্পানী ভারতবাসীর প্রেরিত কোন মাল ভারতীয় জাহাজে প্রেরণ করিলে তাহা বীমা করিতে রাজী হয় না। এজন্য ভারতীয় বহির্ব্বাণিজ্য এবং উপকূল বাণিজ্যের পরিমাণ বিপুল হইলেও আজ পর্য্যন্ত কোন ভারতীয় জাহাজবীমা কোম্পানী উল্লেখযোগ্যভাবে উন্নতি সাধন করিতে সমর্থ হয় নাই। এই ব্যাপারে আর একটী বিষম ক্ষতির কারণ হইতেছে যে, ভারতবর্ষে জাহাজ

নির্ম্মাণের শিল্প গড়িয়া উঠিতে পারিতেছে না। বিগত মহাযুদ্ধের পূর্ব্ববর্ত্তী দশ বৎসরেই পৃথিবীর নানা দেশে একশত ও তদূর্দ্ধ টনের ১৭ হাজার জাহাজ নির্ম্মিত হইয়াছিল এবং সেই সব জাহাজের মোটমাট মাল বহনের যোগ্যতা ছিল ২ কোটী ৮০ লক্ষ টন, সেই স্থলে যুদ্ধের পূর্ব্বে ও পরে ভারতবর্ষে মাত্র ২২টী ক্ষুদ্র ক্ষুদ্র জাহাজ তৈয়ার হইয়াছে। এই বলিলেই যথেষ্ট হইবে যে, গত ১৯৩৫ সালের শেষ পর্য্যন্ত ইংলণ্ডের ১ কোটী ৭৩ লক্ষ, আমেরিকার যুক্তরাজ্যের ৯৬ লক্ষ, জাপানের ৪০ লক্ষ, নরওয়ের ৩৯ লক্ষ, জার্ম্মাণীর ৩৭ লক্ষ, ফান্সের ৩০ লক্ষ, ইতালীর ২৮ লক্ষ, হল্যাণ্ডের ২৫ লক্ষ, সুইডেনের ১৫ লক্ষ এবং গ্রীসের ১৭ লক্ষ টন মালবহনকারী নিজস্ব জাহাজ ছিল, সেই স্থলে ভারতবাসীর নিজস্ব সমস্ত জাহাজ মাত্র ২ লক্ষ ৭২ হাজার টন মাল বহন করিবার উপযুক্ত। ভারতবর্ষের উপকূল বাণিজ্যে বর্ত্তমানে যে কয়টী দেশীয় জাহাজ কোম্পানী রহিয়াছে, তাহার মধ্যে মাত্র সিন্ধিয়া ষ্টিম নেভিগেশন কোম্পানীই বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখযোগ্য। এই কোম্পানীর ৪৩ হাজার টন মাল বহনের উপযোগী মাত্র ১০টী জাহাজ রহিয়াছে। পক্ষান্তরে ভারতবর্ষে বি আই এস এন্ কোম্পানী নামক যে ব্রিটিশ কোম্পানী রহিয়াছে, একমাত্র তাহাদেরই ৭ লক্ষ ৫৭ হাজার টনের ১২৮টি জাহাজ রহিয়াছে। ইংলণ্ডে বর্ত্তমানে জাহাজ নির্ম্মাণ ও জাহাজের মেরামতী কাজে প্রায় একলক্ষ লোক নিয়োজিত আছে। জাহাজী ব্যবসায় এবং জাহাজ-শিল্পে ভারতবাসী যদি তাঁহার যথাযোগ্য স্থান অধিকার করিতে সমর্থ হয়, তাহা হইলে উহার মারফতে প্রত্যক্ষ ও পরোক্ষভাবে কত ভারতবাসী অন্ন-সংস্থানের সুযোগ পাইবে, তাহা সহজেই অনুমেয়। এই প্রসঙ্গে আরও উল্লেখযোগ্য যে, যে সমস্ত বিদেশী জাহাজ কোম্পানী ভারতে ব্যবসায়ে লিপ্ত আছে, তাহারা যোগ্য ভারতবাসীকে কোন জাহাজে দায়িত্বপূর্ণ পদে নিযুক্ত করিতে পর্য্যন্ত রাজী নহে। ইদানীং "ডাফরীণ" নামক সরকারী জাহাজে শিক্ষাপ্রাপ্ত ভারত-বাসীদের মধ্যে বেকার-সমস্যা সম্পর্কে এই কথা বিশেষভাবে প্রমাণিত হইয়াছে।

জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ে ভারতবাসীর এই দৈন্যদশা অতিক্রম করার জন্য এবং এই ব্যবসায়ের মারফতে ভারতবর্ষ হইতে বৎসর বৎসর ৫০ কোটী টাকা করিয়া শোষণের পথ বন্ধ করিবার জন্য ভারতবাসী চেষ্টার ত্রুটি করে নাই। বিগত

শতাব্দীর শেষ ভাগ হইতে বর্ত্তমান সময় পর্য্যন্ত ভারতবাসী এই ব্যবসায়ে তাহার যথাযোগ্য স্থান দখল করিবার জন্য ৩২টী জাহাজ কোম্পানী গঠন করিয়াছে; কিন্তু এই সব কোম্পানীকে কোন সাহায্য করা দূরে থাকুক, বিপুল অর্থবান বিদেশী কোম্পানীর অবৈধ আক্রমণ হইতে রক্ষা করিবার জন্য গবর্ণমেণ্ট আজ পর্য্যন্ত উল্লেখযোগ্য কোন সাহায্য করেন নাই। উহার ফলে বিপুল পরিমাণ ক্ষতি দিয়া উক্ত ৩২টী কোম্পানীর মধ্যে ২৩টী কোম্পানীই ফেল পড়িয়াছে। বাকী যে ৯টী কোম্পানী রহিয়াছে, তাহারাও বিদেশীর অবৈধ প্রতিযোগিতার জন্য মাথা তুলিতে সমর্থ হইতেছে না। বিদেশী জাহাজ অধ্যুষিত কোন অঞ্চলে ভারতীয় কোম্পানীর কোন জাহাজ চলাচল আরম্ভ হইলেই বিদেশী কোম্পানী জাহাজের ভাড়া অসম্ভব কমাইয়া দেয়। এজন্য যে ক্ষতি হয় তাহা বিদেশী জাহাজ অনায়াসে সহ্য করিতে পারে; কিন্তু ভারতীয় কোম্পানীর পক্ষে এইভাবে বেশী দিন ক্ষতি সহ্য করা সম্ভব হয় না। কাজেই ভারতীয় কোম্পানী অল্পদিন পরেই ফেল পড়ে এবং বিদেশী কোম্পানী তখন পুনরায় ভাড়া বাড়াইয়া দিয়া নিজেদের ক্ষতি পোষাইয়া লয়। ভারতীয় যতগুলি জাহাজ কোম্পানী আজ পর্য্যন্ত ফেল পড়িয়াছে, তাহার প্রায় প্রত্যেকটির ইতিহাসই এইরূপ।

বিদেশী জাহাজ কোম্পানী ভারতীয় জাহাজ কোম্পানীকে ধ্বংস করিবার উদ্দেশ্যে আরও একটি নিন্দনীয় প্রথা অবলম্বন করিয়া থাকে। উহাকে ডেফার্ড রিবেট প্রথা বলা হয়। এই প্রথা অনুযায়ী ভারতীয় ব্যবসায়িগণ যদি ক্রমাগত এক বৎসর বা অনুরূপ সময় পর্য্যন্ত বিদেশী জাহাজে তাহার সমস্ত মাল আমদানী-রপ্তানী করে, তাহা হইলে তাহাদিগের নিকট হইতে আদায়ী ভাড়ার শতকরা দশ ভাগ পর্য্যন্ত রিবেট বা ছাড়ান দেওয়া হয়। কাজেই রিবেট কাটা যাওয়ার ভয়ে ভারতীয় ব্যবসায়িগণ তাহাদের প্রেরিত মালের সামান্য অংশও দেশী জাহাজে পাঠাইতে রাজী হয় না। এতদ্ব্যতীত বিদেশী জাহাজবীমা কোম্পানীগুলিও কি ভাবে ভারতীয় জাহাজে প্রেরিত মালপত্র বীমা করিতে অস্বীকার করিয়া ভারতীয় ব্যবসায়িগণকে বিদেশী জাহাজে মালপত্র পাঠাইতে বাধ্য করে, তাহা উপরে উল্লিখিত হইয়াছে। এই সব ব্যাপারে বিদেশী জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলি একটি

এসোসিয়েশন গঠন করিয়া জোটবন্দীভাবে কাজ করিতেছে। এই অনাচার বন্ধ করিবার জন্য বহুদিন ধরিয়া দেশে আন্দোলন হইতেছে। এই সম্পর্কে ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থা পরিষদে শ্রীযুক্ত ক্ষিতীশ নিয়োগীর চেষ্টায় গত ১৯৩০ সালে ইনল্যাণ্ড ষ্টিম নেভিগেশন আইন নামে একটি আইন পাশ হওয়াতে মাত্র দেশের অভ্যন্তরস্থ নদীসমূহে এই ধরণের অবৈধ প্রতিযোগিতা বন্ধ হইয়াছে; কিন্তু উপকূল বাণিজ্যে এই অবৈধ প্রতিযোগিতা এখনও পূর্ণভাবে বলবৎ আছে। গবর্ণমেণ্ট যে কেবল এই অন্যায় প্রতিযোগিতা বন্ধ করিতেছেন না এমন নহে—তাঁহারা একদিকে বিদেশী জাহাজগুলিকে সরকারী মালপত্র এবং ডাক বহনের অধিকার দিয়া উহা-দিগের শক্তি বৃদ্ধি করিতেছেন এবং অন্যদিকে অন্ততঃ উপকূল বাণিজ্যে ভারতীয় জাহাজের একাধিপত্য প্রতিষ্ঠা ও বিদেশী জাহাজের অবৈধ্য প্রতিযোগিতা বন্ধ করিবার জন্য ভারতবাসীর তরফ হইতে সর্ব্বপ্রকার আইন প্রণয়নে বাধা দিয়া আসিতেছেন। বিগত ১৯২৮ সালে মিঃ হাজী যখন ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থা পরিষদে ভারতের উপকূল বাণিজ্যের শতকরা ৭৫ ভাগ ভারতীয় জাহাজের জন্য সংরক্ষিত করিবার উদ্দেশ্যে একটি বিল পেশ করেন, সেই সময় হইতে বর্ত্তমানকাল পর্য্যন্ত এই বিষয়ে গবর্ণমেণ্টের কার্য্যকলাপ ভারতে ইংরাজ রাজত্বের ইতিহাসে একটি মসীকৃষ্ণ অধ্যায়। বারান্তরে এই বিষয়ে বিস্তৃতভাবে আলোচনা করিব।

[*Translated from the Ananda Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), dated 11th June, 1936.*]

INDIANS IN MARITIME ACTIVITIES.

(Commercial Editor)

I

A full discussion of the fact, that Indians were once equal to all other progressive nations of the world in regard to maritime activities at a time when the Westerners came into this land for trade, has been made by Prof. Radhakumud Mukherjee in his "History of the Indian Shipping." From very ancient times down to the first decade of the 19th century, Indian goods were imported and exported by Indian ships. Even after the arrival of the British in India, Indian ships would anchor in the Thames, being fully loaded with merchandise. In the year 1800, the then Governor-General reported that Indian ships of the capacity of ten thousand tons carried goods to England from the Port of Calcutta. In those days, wooden ships, made in India, were superior to the English ships. Mr. Moreland says that it was Indian ships that carried Indian goods to foreign lands during the reign of Akbar. In his opinion, no other nation in Europe save the Portuguese had such big ships which traversed the sea in those days with Indian passengers. Afterwards, Europe replaced wood by steel and the sail by the steam-engine for their ships. On the other hand, English supremacy was gradually making itself felt in India. The British Government introduced in India the Monopoly Act in Navigation then prevalent in England and the British Companies were then being patronised with money for the establishment of British Steam Navigation Companies in India also. All these causes absolutely annihilated the Indian shipping industry and Indian maritime activities. British Steam Navigation Companies from that day forward saw the dawn of their supremacy overseas, in coastal routes and in inland rivers—everywhere be it in trade affairs or in passenger services.

In these days, cargo to the extent of fifty laks of tons is carried

between ports on the Indian coast, and goods amounting to one crore and twenty lakhs of tons are exchanged with the foreign land. Of the coastal trade only, 23.7 per cent. of the total cargo is carried by Indian companies and the rest, *viz.*, 76.3 per cent. is devoured by the foreign companies. Of the foreign trade of one crore and twenty lakhs of tons, not a single ton of cargo is carried by Indian ships, nor do they carry a single passenger. In inland services also, the cargo and the passengers are mostly carried by foreign ships.

In his "Economics of Shipping," Mr. Haji has stated that an annual income of 57 crores of rupees is earned by all the shipping companies in India, both in cargo and passenger services. Out of this sum, the foreign companies capture 50 crores of rupees annually. This does not, of course, include the earnings of the foreign companies in inland services. All this clearly shows what a vast scope the foreign steamship companies have to exploit the great resources of India.

Nor is this all. Indian trade and insurance business are at a great disadvantage owing to the shipping business being entirely under foreign control. The foreign companies have, in their Indian trade, earned an annual profit of 20 per cent. of their total capital invested therein annually even up to the beginning of the present economic depression.

This clearly brings home the fact that they have adversely affected Indian shippers by realising exhorbitant freight on Indian cargo and have thus widened the scope of the imports of foreign goods. Moreover, the foreign marine insurance companies are not agreeable to insure Indian goods transported in Indian ships. That is why no Indian marine insurance company has made remarkable progress up till now, though the foreign and coastal trade of India is enormous. Another outstanding consequence of this sort of monopoly is that the ship-building industry in India is prevented from flourishing. In the decade prior to the last Great War, seventeen thousand ships of the capacity of hundred tons and upwards, were built in various parts of the world. And

those ships had a total capacity of 2 crores and 80 lakhs of ton. Against this only 22 small ships were built in India before the war. It suffices to say that till the close of 1935, the cargo ships of England had the capacity of 1 crore and 73 lakhs of tons, of U. S. A. 96 lakhs, of Japan 40 lakhs, of Norway 39 lakhs, of Germany 37 lakhs, of France 30 lakhs, of Italy 28 lakhs, of Holland 25 lakhs, of Sweden 15 lakhs and of Greece 17 lakhs of tons.

Against this, the capacity of Indian ships was only 2 lakhs and 72 thousand tons. Of the few steamship companies of this country that ply in the coastal trade, the Scindia Steam Navigation Co., Ltd., is by far the most important one. This Company has got only 10 ships of the cargo carrying capacity of 43 thousand tons. On the other hand, the B. I. S. N. Co., alone in India has got 128 ships of the capacity of 7 lakhs and 57 thousand tons.

At present in England approximately a lakh of hands are in employment in the ship-building and ship-repairing industries.

It can be easily imagined how many Indians will get opportunities, directly or indirectly, in earning their livelihood if they are able to acquire a proper footing in shipping business and industry. It can be further stated that the foreign navigation companies in India are not ready to appoint even properly qualified Indians to any responsible posts in any of their ships. Only recently this has been proved to be true as shown by the unemployment problem among the Indians trained in the Government Training Ship "Dufferin".

Indians, in order to overcome these difficulties in shipping and to stop the drain of 50 crores of rupees annually, have left no stone unturned. From the latter part of the last century up till now, Indians organised 32 navigation companies; but far from helping these infant companies, the Government has made no effort worthy of mention even for safeguarding them from the unfair attack of the huge foreign companies. Consequently, 23, out of the said 32 Indian companies, have become bankrupt owing to their enormous losses. The remaining nine companies are struggling against the unfair competition of the foreigners. If

in any part of the country, which has already been captured by the foreign steamship companies, an Indian company starts business, the foreigners at once declare a freight war. They can easily bear the loss but it is impossible for an Indian company to run long under the circumstances. Hence the Indian company fails in the struggle, within a very short period and the foreign company again makes good their loss by enhancing the rate of freight. The causes of the failures of all the Indian steamship companies are the same.

In order to annihilate the Indian steamship companies, the foreigners adopt another objectionable method called the "Deferred Rebate System." According to this system, if Indian merchants continually for a year or so, transact business with them, both in import and export, they are granted a rebate of ten per cent. of the freight already collected from them. So, for fear of being deprived of their right to the rebate, the Indian merchants cannot patronise the indigenous companies even with the smallest portion of their business. Besides, it has been stated above how the foreign marine insurance companies by refusing to insure the goods sent by the Indian navigation companies, compel Indian merchants to continue to place their business with the foreign companies. In these matters the foreign companies after forming an assiociation amongst themselves, work in co-operation with one another. In order to put a stop to this sort of monopolistic extortion, a movement is prevalent in this country. By the successful effort of Mr. Kshitish Chandra Neogy, a Bill named "Indian Steam Navigation Act" has been passed by the Legislative Assembly in 1930 and thereby, this sort of unfair competition has been put a stop to in inland river serivces only. But in the case of coastal trade, such unfair competition is still in force. The Government is not only putting a stop to these competitions but is rather adding to their strength, by allowing the foreign companies to carry Government cargo and mails, and on the other hand, the Government is hampering the enactment of laws of any kind in favour of establishing the predominance of the Indian steamship companies at least in the coastal trade. From 1928, when Mr. Haji introduced

his Bill in the Legislative Assembly for the reservation of 75 per cent. of the Indian coastal trade for Indian ships, until now, the Government activities regarding this are a disgraceful chapter in the history of the British Raj in India. This will be fully discussed later on.

[*Reprinted from the Ananda Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), dated 13th June, 1936.*]

উপকূল বাণিজ্যে ভারতীয় জাহাজ

[বাণিজ্য সম্পাদক]

গত বুধবারে "জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ে ভারতবাসী" শীর্ষক প্রবন্ধে দেখাইয়াছি যে, ভারতবর্ষে কি বিদেশের সহিত, কি ভারতের উপকূলবর্ত্তী এক বন্দর হইতে অন্য বন্দরে এবং কি দেশের অভ্যন্তরস্থ নদীসমূহে মালপত্র ও যাত্রীবহনে সর্ব্বত্র বিদেশী জাহাজ কোম্পানীর একাধিপত্য বর্ত্তমান। এই প্রবন্ধে আরও উল্লেখ করা হইয়াছে যে, বিদেশী জাহাজ কোম্পানী যাত্রী ও মালবহনের কাজে প্রত্যেক বৎসর ভারতবাসীর নিকট হইতে ৫০ কোটী টাকা আদায় করিয়া থাকে। ভারতবাসী কোন জাহাজ কোম্পানী খুলিলেই প্রচুর ধনবলে বলীয়ান বিদেশী জাহাজ কোম্পানী যাত্রী ও মালের ভাড়া কমাইয়া দিয়া এবং ডেফার্ড রিবেট নামক নিন্দনীয় পন্থা অবলম্বন করিয়া কি ভাবে ভারতীয়গণকে ব্যবসা হইতে হঠাইয়া দেয় তাহাও উক্ত প্রবন্ধে আলোচিত হইয়াছে। ভারত সরকার দেশীয় জাহাজী ব্যবসায় ও জাহাজী শিল্পের উন্নতির জন্য কোন অর্থ সাহায্য করা দূরে থাকুক, এমন কি আজ পর্য্যন্ত বিদেশীদের এই অবৈধ প্রতিযোগিতা হইতে দেশীয় জাহাজ কোম্পানীকে রক্ষা করিবার জন্য কিছু করিতেছেন না। এই ব্যাপারে গবর্ণমেণ্ট যে নিন্দনীয় এবং দেশের স্বার্থের পক্ষে অহিতকর মনোভাব অবলম্বন করিয়াছেন তৎসম্বন্ধে এখানে একটু আলোচনা করিতেছি।

গত বারে একথা উল্লেখ করা হইয়াছে যে, অন্ততঃ দেশের অভ্যন্তরস্থ নদীসমূহে এবং ভারতবর্ষের উপকূলবর্ত্তী বন্দরগুলির মধ্যে মালপত্র আমদানী-রপ্তানী ও যাত্রী চলাচলের ব্যবসা হস্তগত করিবার জন্য ভারতবাসী এই পর্য্যন্ত ৩২টী জাহাজ কোম্পানী গঠন করিয়াছে—কিন্তু বিদেশী জাহাজের অবৈধ প্রতি-যোগিতার ফলে উহার মধ্যে ২৩টী কোম্পানীই ফেল পড়িয়াছে। এই অবস্থার প্রতিকারের জন্য বহুদিন পর্য্যন্ত দেশের লোক গবর্ণমেণ্টের নিকট আবেদন নিবেদন করিয়াছে। কিন্তু এই ব্যাপারে গবর্ণমেণ্ট তাঁহাদের একটী অঙ্গুলী হেলনও করেন নাই। অবশেষে বিগত ১৯২১ সালে ভারতের বাজার জাপানের

প্রতিযোগিতা হইতে সুরক্ষিত করিবার অভিসন্ধি লইয়া ভারতে রক্ষণমূলক নীতির ইতিকর্ত্তব্যতা সম্বন্ধে পরামর্শ দিবার জন্য গবর্ণমেণ্ট ফিজক্যাল কমিশন নামক একটী কমিটি বসান। এই কমিটিতে অন্যান্য শিল্পের দুরবস্থার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে জাহাজী শিল্পের বিষয়ও আলোচনা হয় এবং ফিজক্যাল কমিশন বিদেশী জাহাজ কোম্পানী কর্ত্তৃক অনুসৃত ডেফার্ড রিবেট প্রথা নামক নিন্দনীয় প্রথার উচ্ছেদের জন্য আইন প্রণয়ন করিতে গবর্ণমেণ্টকে খুব জোরের সহিত নির্দ্দেশ দেন। কিন্তু গবর্ণমেণ্ট ফিজক্যাল কমিশনের এই প্রস্তাবে ভ্রূক্ষেপও করেন নাই। ফলে দেশের ভিতর এই বিষয়ক আন্দোলন তীব্রতর হয়। তখন গবর্ণমেণ্ট এই আন্দোলনকে ধামা চাপা দিবার জন্য বিগত ১৯২৩ সালের ফেব্রুয়ারী মাসে মার্কেণ্টাইল মেরিণ কমিটি নামক আর একটী কমিটি বসান। এই কমিটিতে ইংলণ্ডের জাহাজ ব্যবসায়ে অনেক বিশেষজ্ঞ ব্যক্তিও সদস্য ছিলেন। উহারাও তাঁহাদের রিপোর্টে স্পষ্ট ভাষায় এরূপ অভিমত দেন যে, অন্যান্য দেশের ন্যায় ভারতবর্ষেরও উপকূল বাণিজ্যে ভারতীয় জাহাজকে একাধিপত্য প্রদান করা উচিত। ভারতীয় জাহাজ শিল্পের উন্নতির জন্য অর্থ সাহায্য করিতে এবং বিদেশী জাহাজের অবৈধ প্রতি-যোগিতা বে-আইনী বলিয়া ঘোষণা করিতেও কমিটি গবর্ণমেণ্টকে পরামর্শ দেন। কিন্তু ফিজক্যাল কমিশনের পরামর্শের ন্যায় মার্কেণ্টাইল মেরিণ কমিটির এই সব পরামর্শও গবর্ণমেণ্ট গ্রহণ করেন নাই। অবশেষে অনন্যোপায় হইয়া বিগত ১৯২৮ সালের সেপ্টেম্বর মাসে মিঃ সারাভাই নেমচাঁদ হাজী ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থা পরিষদে উপকূল বাণিজ্য সংরক্ষণ বিল নামক একটী আইনের খসড়া পেশ করেন। এই বিলের মধ্যে বিদেশের সহিত বাণিজ্যে ও যাত্রীবহনে বিদেশী জাহাজের যে একাধিপত্য বর্ত্তমান তাহাতে হস্তক্ষেপ করার কোন কথা ছিল না। দেশের উপকূল বাণিজ্যে যে অবৈধ প্রতিযোগিতা হইতেছে তাহা বন্ধ করিবার জন্যও এই বিলে জোর দেওয়া হয় নাই। বিলের মধ্যে মাত্র এই ব্যবস্থা ছিল যে, ৫ বৎসরের মধ্যে ভারতের উপকূলবর্ত্তী বন্দরসমূহে বাণিজ্যে রত সমস্ত জাহাজ কোম্পানীর মূলধন, পরিচালক মণ্ডলীর সদস্য ও জাহাজ কোম্পানীর যৌথ কারবার হইলে উহার ভোটারদের শতকরা ৭৫ ভাগ যাহাতে ভারতীয় হয় তজ্জন্য গবর্ণমেণ্টকে ব্যবস্থা করিতে হইবে। এই বিলের মধ্যে অস্বাভাবিকতাও কিছু ছিল না। কেননা

পৃথিবীর সকল দেশেই উপকূল বাণিজ্যে দেশীয় জাহাজের একাধিপত্যমূলক ব্যবস্থা রহিয়াছে। বিগত ১৯৩১ সালে জাতিসঙ্ঘ এই বিষয়ে যে তদন্ত করিয়াছিলেন তাহাতে প্রকাশ পাইয়াছে যে, পৃথিবীর ৩১টী সমুদ্রোপকূলবর্ত্তী দেশের মধ্যে ২৭টী দেশেই উপকূল বাণিজ্যে দেশীয় জাহাজের একাধিপত্যের ব্যবস্থা রহিয়াছে। অবশ্য ইংলণ্ডে এই ব্যবস্থা নাই। উহার কারণ এই যে, ইংলণ্ডের উপকূল বাণিজ্যের শতকরা ৯৮ ভাগই ইংলণ্ড দেশীয় জাহাজের অধিকৃত এবং কোন বিদেশীর পক্ষে উহাদের সহিত প্রতিযোগিতা করিবার কোন সম্ভাবনা নাই। যাহা হউক মিঃ হাজীর এই সীমাবদ্ধ বিলটীও উত্থাপিত হওয়া মাত্র ইউরোপীয় মহলে তুমুল সোরগোল উঠে। কেহ বলেন, ভারতীয়গণ ইউরোপীয় জাহাজ কোম্পানীর সম্পত্তি বাজেয়াপ্ত করিতে চেষ্টা করিতেছে, কেহ বলেন যে, এই ধরণের আইন বে-আইনী ও বর্ণ বৈষম্যমূলক, আবার কেহ বলেন যে, এই আইনে ভারতের স্বার্থের ক্ষতি হইবে। বলা বাহুল্য যে, গবর্ণমেণ্টও ইউরোপীয়দের মতের সহিত সায় দিয়া এই বিলের বিরুদ্ধাচরণ করিতে আরম্ভ করেন, এমন কি বিলের সিলেক্ট কমিটির রিপোর্টে তদানীন্তন বাণিজ্য-সচিব স্বয়ং স্যার জর্জ্জ রেইনীও স্পষ্ট ভাষায় মত প্রকাশ করেন যে, বিলের মূলনীতিতে অন্যের সম্পত্তি বাজেয়াপ্ত করিবার ব্যবস্থা রহিয়াছে। অথচ মিঃ হাজী এই বিলটী ব্যবস্থা পরিষদে পেশ করিবার পূর্ব্বে এই বিষয়ে দুইবার সরকারী আইন অফিসারদের পরামর্শ লইয়াছিলেন এবং আইন অফিসারগণ দুইবারই এই আইনের মূলনীতির মধ্যে বে-আইনী কিছু নাই বলিয়া অভিমত দিয়াছিলেন। এই সম্বন্ধে আরও উল্লেখযোগ্য যে, বিগত মহাযুদ্ধের পর হইতে ইংলণ্ডের জাহাজ ব্যবসায়িগণ ইংলণ্ডে পুনরায় নেভিগেশন আইন জারী করিয়া কেবল ইংলণ্ডের উপকূল বাণিজ্য নহে, সমগ্র বৃটিশ সাম্রাজ্যের উপকূল বাণিজ্যে বৃটিশ জাহাজের একচেটিয়া অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্য দাবী করিয়া আসিতেছেন। বিগত ১৯১৬-১৭ সালেও ইংলণ্ডের জাহাজ ব্যবসায়িগণ ভারতের উপকূল বাণিজ্যে বৃটিশ জাহাজের একাধিপত্য প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্য একটী প্রস্তাব করেন এবং ১৯১৮ সালে বৃটিশ শিপিং কমিটিতে এই প্রস্তাব লইয়া আলোচনা হয়। মার্কেণ্টাইল মেরিণ কমিটিতে বঙ্গীয় শেতাঙ্গ বণিক সভা যে বিবৃতিপত্র দাখিল করেন তাহাতেও

ভারতীয় উপকূল বাণিজ্য বৃটিশ জাহাজের একচেটিয়া সম্পত্তিতে পরিণত করিবার প্রস্তাব উত্থাপন করা হয়। সুতরাং দেখা যাইতেছে যে, ইংরাজ জাহাজ ব্যবসায়িগণ বা শ্বেতাঙ্গ বণিক সভা ভারতীয় উপকূল বাণিজ্যে একচেটিয়া অধিকার দানের নীতিতে বিশ্বাসী এবং উহার মধ্যে বে-আইনী কিছু আছে বলিয়া মনে করেন না। মাত্র ভারতবাসীকে সেই অধিকার দানেই তাঁহাদের যত কিছু আপত্তি।

যাহা হউক গবর্ণমেণ্টের বিরুদ্ধাচরণের ফলে মিঃ হাজীর বিল আইনে পরিণত করা সম্ভব হয় নাই। ঐ সময়ে লর্ড আরুইন ভারতের বড়লাট ছিলেন। তিনি ভারতীয় ও ইউরোপীয় জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলির প্রতিনিধিগণকে একটী বৈঠকে সম্মিলিত করিয়া উভয় পক্ষে একটা আপোষ রফা করিবার চেষ্টা করেন। কিন্তু ইউরোপীয় জাহাজওয়ালাদের স্বার্থপরতার ফলে এই চেষ্টাও পণ্ড হয়, ইত্যবসরে ভারতের নূতন শাসনতন্ত্র নির্দ্ধারণের জন্য গোল টেবিল বৈঠক বসে। ঐ সময়ে গবর্ণমেণ্ট পক্ষ হইতে বলা হয় যে, বিষয়টী সম্বন্ধে গোল টেবিল বৈঠকেই সিদ্ধান্ত করা হইবে। গোল টেবিল বৈঠকে কি সিদ্ধান্ত হইয়াছে তাহা সর্ব্বজনবিদিত। নূতন ভারত শাসন আইনের ১১৬ ধারায় বিধান দেওয়া হইয়াছে যে, ভারতে যে সমস্ত বৃটিশ জাহাজ কোম্পানী ব্যবসা চালাইতেছে, তাহারা ভারতীয় কোম্পানী বলিয়া গণ্য হইবে এবং ভারত সরকার এদেশে জাহাজী ব্যবসার উন্নতির জন্য যদি কোন অর্থসাহায্য করেন তবে বৃটিশ জাহাজ কোম্পানীও সমভাবে উহার অংশীদার হইবে। সুতরাং ভবিষ্যতে দেশীয় জাহাজ শিল্পের জন্য যদি গবর্ণমেণ্ট কোন অর্থ সাহায্যও করেন তাহা হইলে দেশীয় জাহাজের প্রতিযোগী বৃটিশ জাহাজও এই সাহায্য পাইবে। তারপর ভারত শাসন আইনের আর একটী ধারায় বিধান দেওয়া হইয়াছে যে, বৃটিশ জাহাজে ভারতীয় অফিসার বা ইঞ্জিনিয়ার নিয়োগ বাধ্যতামূলক করিয়া যদি কোন আইন প্রয়োগ চেষ্টা হয় তবে উহা বৈষম্যমূলক ব্যবস্থা বলিয়া গণ্য হইবে। সুতরাং নূতন শাসনতন্ত্রের আমলে উপকূল বাণিজ্যে বিদেশীয় জাহাজের একচেটিয়া অধিকারের বিলোপ করিয়া ভারতীয় জাহাজের পক্ষে স্বাধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠা করা যে অসম্ভব তাহা বলাই বাহুল্য। নূতন ভারত শাসন আইনে এই সব ব্যবস্থা করিয়াও গবর্ণমেণ্ট সন্তুষ্ট হন নাই। বৃটিশ পার্লামেণ্টে একটী প্রশ্নের উত্তরে ভূতপূর্ব্ব ভারত সচিব স্যার স্যামুয়েল

হোর একথাও স্পষ্ট ভাষায় জানাইয়া দিয়াছেন যে, ভারতের উপকূল বাণিজ্য ভারতীয়দের জন্য সংরক্ষিত করা গবর্ণমেণ্টের অভিপ্রেত নহে। এদিকে ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থা পরিষদে ভূতপূর্ব্ব বাণিজ্য সচিব স্যার জোসেফ ভোর ঘোষণা করিয়াছেন যে, বৃটিশ জাহাজ কোম্পানীর সহিত ভারতীয় জাহাজ কোম্পানীর একটা রফা করিয়া এই বিষয়ের মীমাংসা করার চেষ্টা হইতেছে। কিন্তু এই মীমাংসা কি প্রকার হইবে এবং বৃটিশ জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলি ভারতীয় জাহাজকে অনুগ্রহ করিয়া ভারতীয় উপকূল বাণিজ্যের কত অংশ ছাড়িয়া দিবে, গবর্ণমেণ্টের মতে কত অংশ ছাড়িয়া দেওয়া উচিত তৎসম্বন্ধে এখন পর্য্যন্ত কিছুই জানা যায় নাই।

সুতরাং ভারতবাসী যদি প্রস্তাবিত নূতন শাসনতন্ত্র বাতিল করিয়া দিয়া দেশের শিল্প বাণিজ্যে স্বাধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠা করিতে সমর্থ না হয় তাহা হইলে দেশীয় জাহাজী ব্যবসায় বা জাহাজ শিল্পেরও কোন আশা নাই। এইজন্য ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থা পরিষদে বর্ত্তমানে ডেফার্ড রিবেট নামক নিন্দনীয় প্রথার উচ্ছেদের জন্য যে বিল উপস্থিত করা হইয়াছে তৎসম্বন্ধে আমরা কোন উৎসাহ বোধ করিতেছি না। সমগ্র সমস্যার উহা একটী ক্ষুদ্র অংশ। বিশেষতঃ বিগত ১৯২৯ সালে ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থা পরিষদে মিঃ হাজীও অনুরূপ একটী বিল উপস্থিত করিয়াছিলেন। কিন্তু গবর্ণমেণ্টের বিরুদ্ধাচরণের ফলে এই বিলটীও বানচাল হইয়া যায়। এই সম্বন্ধে তদানীন্তন বাণিজ্য সচিব সার জর্জ্জ রেইনী মন্তব্য করেন যে, এই প্রথায় জাহাজ চলাচল এবং মালের ভাড়ার স্থায়িত্ব সাধিত হওয়াতে দেশের বিশেষ উপকার হইতেছে। বর্ত্তমানেও যে গবর্ণমেণ্ট এই মতই পোষণ করেন তাহা মনে না করিবার কিছু কারণ নাই। আর গবর্ণমেণ্ট যদি অন্যান্য দেশের অনুকরণে বিশেষভাবে দেশীয় জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলিকে বিদেশী জাহাজের সমকক্ষতা করিবার শক্তি দিবার জন্য অর্থ-সাহায্য না করেন তাহা হইলে মাত্র ডেফার্ড রিবেট প্রথা বাতিল হইলেও ভারতীয় জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলি মাথা তুলিতে সমর্থ হইবে না। এই সাহায্য দানের ব্যাপারে পৃথিবীর অন্যান্য স্বাধীন দেশের তুলনায় ভারত সরকারের মনোভাবের কত আকাশ পাতাল প্রভেদ রহিয়াছে তাহা বারান্তরে আলোচনা করিব।

[*Translated from the "Ananda Bazar Patrika" (Calcutta), dated 13th June, 1936.*]

(Commerce Editor)

II

It has been stated in the previous article entitled "Indians in Maritime Activities," which appeared in the Wednesday issue of our paper, that the foreign steamship companies are predominant in carriage of cargo and passengers—everywhere, in fact—in overseas trade, in the coastal trade, as well as in inland rivers. It has been further shown that these foreign companies realise 50 crores of rupees from India in freight earnings by carrying cargo and passengers. And the fact that the rich and powerful foreign companies oust Indians from the sphere of trade whenever they start a new steamship company, by reducing the freight and fare rates and by having recourse to the obnoxious principle, namely "Deferred Rebate," has also been clearly proved in the previous article. The India Government, far from patronising the Indian shipping and ship-building industry with subsidy, is doing absolutely nothing to protect this infant industry from the tyranny of the unfair competition of the foreigners.

This article will deal with the policy and the outlook of the Government, which is highly objectionable and most harmful to the interests of the country. It has been pointed out in the last article that in order to capture at least the trades of the inland rivers and the coastal line, the Indians had up till now organised 32 companies, but out of these, as many as 23 companies have failed owing to the unfair competition of the foreigners. The Indian public have repeatedly and frequently ventilated their grievances, so that they might be saved from such a situation. But the Government remained inert. At last, in the year 1921, the Government constituted the Fiscal Commission to consider as to how to protect the Indian market from Japanese competition. This Committee discussed along with the depressed condition of other industries the condition of the shipping industry also and it advised the Government emphatically to enact laws for the abolition of the objectionable

"Deferred Rebate System." But the Government paid no heed to this advice. As a result, an agitation on this matter took a serious turn in the country. In order to get over this agitation, the Government constituted another committee, namely the Mercantile Marine Committee, in February, 1923. Many experts in the British shipping business were amongst the members of this Committee. But they also expressed their clear opinion that as in other countries, Indian shipping also should be granted an entire control over the Indian coastal trade. The Committee further recommended the Government to lend a helping hand for the development of Indian shipping and to declare the competition of foreign steamship companies as illegal. But the advice of this Committee also, like that of the Fiscal Commission, was ignored by the Government. At last, having no way out Mr. Sarabhai Nemchand Haji in September, 1928, introduced his Bill, namely Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill, in the Indian Legislative Assembly. In this Bill, there was no such clear clause as would allow interference with the supremacy of foreign steamship companies, in matters of trade with the foreigners and in that of carrying passengers. No stress was even laid in this Bill on the question of prevention of the unfair competition that prevailed in the coastal trade of this country. The only provision in the Bill was that the Government should arrange so that in the steamship companies that have been established within five years in the Indian coast, 75 per cent. of their capital and of their Directorate and also of their shareholders, if the company be a joint stock one, might be Indians. There was no undue demand in the Bill, for, in all the countries of the world, national steamship companies have been provided with the privilege of supreme control over their coastal trade. It was found from the enquiry held by the League of Nations in 1931, that in 27 out of 31 countries of the world with coast lines, the native companies have got absolute control over their respective coastal trades. Of course, this is not the case with England. But there is a reason for it. 98 per cent. of her coastal trade is carried by British ships and no foreign company can compete with them. However, this modest Bill of Mr. Haji, when introduced in the Assembly,

raised a hue and cry in the European circles. Some said that the Indians were making headway to rob the European companies of their privileges, and others said that this type of legislation was in itself illegal and admitted and encouraged racial discrimination. Some again said that this Bill would adversely affect Indian interests. Needless to say, the Government also dittoed the Europeans and opposed the Bill. Even Sir George Rainey, the then Commerce Member, in the report of the Select Committee clearly stated that the principle of the Bill constituted expropriation and confiscation. But Mr. Haji consulted the Law Officers of the Government twice before he handed over the Bill and observed that there was nothing illegal in its main principle. It is worth mentioning here that from the post-war period, English steamship companies are demanding the reservation of British coastal trade, nay, of the entire imperial trade by passing a Navigation Act. In 1916-17, the English steamship companies made a proposal for establishing the predominace of the British steamship companies over the Indian coastal trade and in 1918 this proposal was discussed in the British Shipping Committee. The statement that was submitted by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce to the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee raised the question of absolute control over the Indian coastal trade by the British steamship companies. It is, therefore, evident that the English steamship companies or the European Merchants' Association count much upon the absolute control over the Indian coastal trade and find nothing illegal in the principle itself. Objection is loud only when that right is to be exercised by Indians.

However, the opposition of the Government stood in the way of Mr. Haji's Bill being passed. Lord Irwin was then the Viceroy of India. He called both Indian and European representatives of the respective steamship companies at a meeting and tried to settle it amicably. But his efforts were frustrated by the selfish motives of the European steamship companies. In the meantime, the Round Table Conference was held for evolving a scheme of new reforms in India. Government then stated that the matter would be decided in the Round Table Conference. And what decision the Round Table Conference arrived at, is best known to the Indian

public. It has been provided in Section 116 of the new Constitution Act that all the British steamship companies, carrying on business in India, will be regarded as Indian companies and if the Government of India gives any help for the improvement of Indian shipping, the British companies also will participate in such benefit. Hence, if the Government helps the national shipping industry in future, their rival British companies also will have a share in such help. In a subsequent section of the Government of India Act, it has been stated that it will be considered discrimination if the appointment of Indian officers and engineers in a British ship, is made compulsory. It is needless to say that under the new constitution, it will be impossible to establish the control of Indian shipping or abolish foreign monopoly in coastal trade. Government is not content even with these provisions. In reply to a question in British Parliament, Sir Samuel Hoare, the ex-Secretary of State for India, has said clearly that Government does not intend to reserve the Indian coastal trade to Indian ships. On the other hand, Sir Joseph Bhore, the ex-Commerce Member, has declared that an attempt is being made to settle the matter by mutual agreement between the Indian and British steamship companies. But nothing is known as yet as to how and what portion of the coastal trade will be sacrificed by the British companies in favour of the Indian companies, and also what portion of the coastal trade, according to Government opinion, should be transferred to Indians.

So, it will be disheartening for Indian shipping trade and shipping industry if Indians do not succeed in obtaining the right of control by repealing the new Reforms Act. We do not feel optimistic about the Bill recently introduced in the Indian Legislative Assembly for abolishing the obnoxious "Deferred Rebate System." That is only a part of the whole problem. In 1929, Mr. Haji also introduced a similar bill in the Assembly. But that bill too was nipped in the bud owing to Government opposition. Sir George Rainey, the then Commerce Member, remarked that the country is being much benefited by the stability of voyages and

of freight through this system. There is no reason to believe that Government do not hold the same view now.

If the Government like other Governments in the world do not offer any financial help to the Indian companies for coping with the competition of the foreign companies, the Indian steamship companies will not be able to maintain their existence simply by the repeal of the "Deferred Rebate System." The next issue of this article will deal with the outlook of the India Government in comparison with the other independent Governments in the world.

[*Reprinted from the Ananda Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), dated 14th June, 1936.*]

জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ে সরকারী সাহায্য

[বাণিজ্য সম্পাদক]

ভারতবর্ষের অভ্যন্তরস্থ নদীসমূহে, উপকূলবর্ত্তী বন্দরে এবং ভারতের সহিত বিদেশের বাণিজ্যে বিদেশী জাহাজের কি প্রকার একাধিপত্য রহিয়াছে এবং অন্ততঃ ভারতের উপকূলবর্ত্তী অঞ্চলে যাহাতে ভারতীয় জাহাজের একাধিপত্য প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়, তজ্জন্য ভারতবাসী নানা ভাবে চেষ্টা করিয়া গবর্ণমেণ্টের প্রতিকূলতার জন্য কি ভাবে ব্যর্থমনোরথ হইতেছে, তৎসম্বন্ধে পূর্ব্ববর্ত্তী দুইটী প্রবন্ধে আলোচনা করা হইয়াছে। বর্ত্তমানে পৃথিবীর বিভিন্ন দেশে জাহাজী ব্যবসায় ও জাহাজী শিল্পের উন্নতির জন্য বিভিন্ন দেশের গবর্ণমেণ্ট প্রত্যক্ষ ও পরোক্ষভাবে কি প্রকার অর্থসাহায্য করিতেছেন এবং উহার সহিত ভারত সরকারের পার্থক্য কত বেশী, তাহার আলোচনা করিতেছি।

পূর্ব্বেই উল্লেখ করা হইয়াছে যে, পৃথিবীর মধ্যে জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ে ইংলণ্ডের মত উন্নত দেশ আর নাই। লয়েডস্ কোম্পানীর প্রকাশিত বিবরণ অনুসারে, বিগত ১৯৩৫ সালের শেষে সমগ্র পৃথিবীতে একশত টন অপেক্ষা বড় আকারের সমস্ত জাহাজের মোটমাট পরিমাণ ছিল ৬ কোটী ৬৪ লক্ষ টন। উহার মধ্যে একমাত্র ইংলণ্ডের জাহাজেরই পরিমাণ ছিল ২ কোটী টনের উপর। এই বৎসরের শেষে সমগ্র পৃথিবীতে ৪ শত টন অপেক্ষা বড় সমুদ্রোপযোগী যে ৩ কোটী টনের জাহাজ ছিল, তাহার মধ্যে ১ কোটী ৮ লক্ষ টনের (শতকরা ৩৬·১ ভাগ) জাহাজ ইংলণ্ডের সম্পত্তি ছিল। এই সব জাহাজের লাভ হিসাবে বিগত ১৯২৮ এবং ১৯২৯ সালেও ইংলণ্ডে বিদেশ হইতে নেট ১৩ কোটী পাউণ্ড (১৭৩ কোটী ৩৩ লক্ষ টাকা) মূল্যের ধনসম্পদ আমদানী হইয়াছে। বর্ত্তমানে ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্যে মন্দা এবং আন্তর্জ্জাতিক প্রতিযোগিতার ফলে ইংলণ্ডের এই আয় কমিয়া গেলেও গত ১৯৩৪ সালে এই বাবদ ইংলণ্ডের ৭ কোটী পাউণ্ড আয় হইয়াছে। ইংলণ্ড যে জাহাজ ব্যবসায়ে আজ জগতের মধ্যে অপ্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী, তাহার অন্যতম প্রধান কারণ, জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ে সরকারী সাহায্য। দুইশত বৎসর পূর্ব্ব হইতে ইংলণ্ডের বাণিজ্যে বৃটিশ

জাহাজের একাধিপত্য প্রতিষ্ঠা করিয়া বৃটিশ গবর্ণমেণ্ট যদি বিভিন্ন সময়ে নেভিগেশন আইন পাশ না করিতেন, তাহা হইলে আজ জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ে ইংলণ্ড এত উন্নত হইত কিনা সন্দেহ। কেবল তাহাই নহে, পরবর্ত্তী কালে নেভিগেশন আইন বাতিল করিয়া দিলেও বৃটিশ গবর্ণমেণ্ট প্রত্যেক বৎসর জাহাজ-শিল্প ও জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ে উন্নতির জন্য নেভেল রিজার্ভ এবং এডমিরালটি সাব্‌ভেনশন হিসাবে অপরিমিত অর্থ ব্যয় করিয়াছেন। এতদ্ব্যতীত এই উদ্দেশ্যে বিগত ১৯০৩ সাল হইতে ১৯২৭ সাল পর্য্যন্ত কুনার্ড ষ্টিমশিল্প কোম্পানী নামক বৃটিশ-জাহাজ কোম্পানীকে প্রত্যেক বৎসর সরকারী রাজস্ব হইতে প্রায় ২৩ লক্ষ টাকা করিয়া সাহায্য দেওয়া হইয়াছে। উহা ছাড়া, কুনার্ড কোম্পানীকে জাহাজ নির্ম্মাণের জন্য বাজার প্রচলিত সুদ অপেক্ষা দুই টাকা কম সুদে ২৬ লক্ষ পাউণ্ড ধার দেওয়া হয়। এই অর্থেই কুনার্ড কোম্পানী সুসিটেনিয়া ও মরেটনিয়া নামক দুইটা সুবৃহৎ জাহাজ নির্ম্মাণ করেন। গত ১৯৩৪ সালের ফেব্রুয়ারী মাস হইতে বৃটিশ গবর্ণমেণ্ট দেশীয় জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলিকে প্রতি বৎসর ২০ লক্ষ পাউণ্ড করিয়া সাহায্য করিতেছেন। বর্ত্তমানে কুইন মেরী নামক যে সুবৃহৎ জাহাজ লইয়া খুব হৈ চৈ হইতেছে, তাহার নির্ম্মাণের জন্যও বৃটিশ গবর্ণমেণ্ট ৩০ লক্ষ পাউণ্ড ঋণ দিয়াছেন। এই সব প্রত্যক্ষ সাহায্য ছাড়া, দেশীয় জাহাজকে ডাক বহনের কনট্রাক্ট দিয়া বৎসর বৎসর বিপুল পরিমাণ টাকা সাহায্য করা হয়। এতদ্ব্যতীত ইংলণ্ডের অধিকারভুক্ত অন্যান্য দেশগুলি এবং ভারতবর্ষেও ডাক বহনের অধিকার দিয়া বৃটিশ গবর্ণমেণ্ট বৃটিশ জাহাজ কোম্পানীকে সাহায্য করিতেছেন। এই সাহায্যের বিষয় চিন্তা করিলে জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ে ইংলণ্ডের এত উন্নতির মধ্যে বিস্ময়ের বিষয় কিছু থাকে না।

কেবল ইংলণ্ডে নহে, পৃথিবীর অন্যান্য দেশেও দেশীয় জাহাজকে গবর্ণমেণ্ট বিশেষভাবে সাহায্য করিতেছেন। আমেরিকার যুক্তরাজ্যে দেশীয় জাহাজকে বরাবর অর্থসাহায্য করা হইতেছে। সম্প্রতি প্রেসিডেণ্ট রুজভেল্ট ঘোষণা করিয়াছেন যে, তিনি দেশীয় জাহাজকে ডাক বহন করিবার জন্য বৎসরে ৩ কোটী ডলার প্রদান করিবেন। বর্ত্তমানের প্রচলিত ভাড়ার হার অনুযায়ী এই কাজে জাহাজগুলি ৩০ লক্ষ ডলারের বেশী পাইতে পারে না; কিন্তু জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ের উন্নতির জন্য প্রেসিডেণ্ট রুজভেণ্ট দেশীয় জাহাজগুলিকে তাহাদের ন্যায্য প্রাপ্য

অপেক্ষা বৎসর বৎসর ২ কোটী ৭০ লক্ষ ডলার করিয়া বেশী দিতেছেন। ইতালীতে মুসোলিনীর শাসনভার গ্রহণের পর হইতে প্রতি বৎসর জাহাজ ব্যবসায়িগণকে ৩০ লক্ষ পাউণ্ড করিয়া সাহায্য দেওয়া হইতেছে। উহার ফলে জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ে আজ ইতালী পৃথিবীর সর্ব্বাপেক্ষা উন্নত দেশগুলির অন্যতম। ফ্রান্সে জাহাজ ব্যবসায়িগণকে প্রতি বৎসর ৫০ লক্ষ পাউণ্ড করিয়া সাহায্য দেওয়া হয় এবং কিছুদিন পূর্ব্বে জাহাজী ব্যবসায়কে আরও ব্যাপকভাবে সাহায্যের জন্য ফ্রান্সে একটী আইন পাশ হইয়াছে। স্পেন, বেলজিয়াম এবং হল্যাণ্ডেও দেশীয় জাহাজ শিল্পের উন্নতির জন্য ইদানীং অনেক বিলিব্যবস্থা করা হইয়াছে—এমন কি, বৃটিশ সাম্রাজ্যের অন্তর্ভুক্ত কানাডা ও দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকার দুই গবর্ণমেণ্ট মিলিয়া উভয় দেশের মধ্যে সরকারী সাহায্যে একটী যুক্ত জাহাজ কোম্পানী গঠনের সঙ্কল্প করিয়াছেন। এই সব দেশেও যে কেবল প্রত্যক্ষভাবে জাহাজ শিল্পকে অর্থসাহায্য করা হয় এমন নহে,—ইংলণ্ডের ন্যায় ঐসব দেশেও দেশীয় জাহাজকে সরকারী ডাক ও মাল বহনের কন্‌ট্রাক্ট দিয়া এবং অল্প সুদে জাহাজ কোম্পানীকে টাকা ধার দিয়া সাহায্য করা হইয়া থাকে।

এই প্রসঙ্গে জাপানের দৃষ্টান্ত বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখযোগ্য। বিগত ১৮৯৬ সালে চীন-জাপান যুদ্ধের পূর্ব্বে জাপানী গবর্ণমেণ্ট দেশীয় জাহাজ শিল্পের উন্নতির জন্য প্রতি বৎসর সাড়ে পনর লক্ষ টাকা করিয়া সাহায্য করিতেন। চীন-জাপান যুদ্ধের পরে জাপানী গবর্ণমেণ্ট নিজস্ব জাহাজের বহর তৈয়ারীর জন্য একটী আইন পাশ করেন। এই আইনে স্থির হয় যে, এক হাজার টনের পর্য্যন্ত ইস্পাত নির্ম্মিত জাহাজ তৈয়ার করিলে তজ্জন্য গবর্ণমেণ্ট প্রতি টনে ১২ ইয়েন (ঐ সময়ে এক ইয়েনের মূল্য এক টাকা অপেক্ষাও বেশী ছিল) করিয়া এবং এক হাজার টন অপেক্ষা বড় জাহাজের জন্য প্রতি টনে ২০ ইয়েন করিয়া সাহায্য করিবেন। এতদ্ব্যতীত স্থির হয় যে, জাহাজে যদি জাপানী মোটর বসান হয়, তাহা হইলে প্রতি অশ্বশক্তির জন্য অতিরিক্ত আরও ৫ ইয়েন করিয়া সাহায্য দেওয়া হইবে। পরবর্ত্তীকালে এই সাহায্যের পরিমাণ আরও নানাভাবে বর্দ্ধিত করা হয় এবং ১৯১০ সালে আইন করিয়া জাপানের উপকূল বাণিজ্যে জাপানী জাহাজের একাধিপত্য প্রতিষ্ঠিত করা হয়। বর্ত্তমানেও জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ের সাহায্যের জন্য

জাপানী গবর্ণমেণ্ট প্রতি বৎসর ১০ লক্ষ পাউণ্ড করিয়া সাহায্য করিতেছেন। এই সব ব্যবস্থার ফলে জাহাজ শিল্পে জাপানের অভূতপূর্ব্ব উন্নতি হইয়াছে এবং প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরে—এমন কি, ভারত মহাসাগরেও জাপানের সহিত ইংলণ্ডের মত দেশেরও প্রতিযোগিতা করা কঠিন হইয়া দাঁড়াইয়াছে। এই বলিলেই যথেষ্ট হইবে যে, বিগত ১৯০৬ সালে জাপানে ১৩টী জাহাজ কোম্পানী ছিল। এই সব কোম্পানীর মোটমাট ৪ লক্ষ ৯১ হাজার টনের মাত্র ৩৪৪টী জাহাজ ছিল। সেই স্থলে ১৯১৯ সাল পর্য্যন্ত জাপানে ৫৬টী জাহাজ কোম্পানী প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয় এবং ঐ বৎসরে জাপানের জাহাজের সংখ্যা ও মালবহনের যোগ্যতা দাঁড়ায় যথাক্রমে ১৫৪২ ও ১৩ লক্ষ ৯৭ হাজার টন। ১৯১৯ সালের পরে বর্ত্তমান সময় পর্য্যন্ত জাপানী জাহাজের পরিমাণ বাড়িয়া প্রায় ৪১ লক্ষ টনে দাঁড়াইয়াছে। অর্থাৎ ৩০ বৎসরে জাপানী জাহাজের ৮ গুণ উন্নতি হইয়াছে।

পৃথিবীর বিভিন্ন দেশের সহিত ভারতবর্ষের অবস্থার তুলনা করিলে কি আকাশ-পাতাল প্রভেদই না দেখা যায়! গত ২৫ বৎসর ধরিয়া আন্দোলনের পরেও ভারত সরকার দেশীয় জাহাজ শিল্পের উন্নতির জন্য আজ পর্য্যন্ত প্রত্যক্ষ-ভাবে একটী পয়সাও সাহায্য করেন নাই বা একটী পয়সাও ধার দেন নাই—গাঁট হইতে পয়সা খরচ করিবার কথা ছাড়িয়াই দিলাম। ভারতের উপকূল বাণিজ্য ভারতীয় জাহাজের জন্য সংরক্ষিত করিয়া এবং ভারতীয় জাহাজকে বিদেশীর অবৈধ প্রতিযোগিতা হইতে রক্ষা করিয়া ভারতীয় জাহাজ শিল্পের উন্নতির জন্য যে চেষ্টা হইতেছে, গবর্ণমেণ্ট কোমর বাঁধিয়া তাহার পর্য্যন্ত বিরুদ্ধাচরণ করিয়াছেন এবং ভবিষ্যতে যাহাতে ভারতীয় জাহাজ শিল্প ও জাহাজী ব্যবসায় মাথা তুলিতে না পারে, তজ্জন্য নূতন ভারত শাসন আইনে পাকা-পোক্ত ব্যবস্থা করা হইয়াছে। ভারতীয় জাহাজ কোম্পানী সরকারী ডাক ও মালপত্র বহনের পর্য্যন্ত অধিকার পায় না। অল্পদিন পূর্ব্বে মাত্র ব্রহ্মদেশীয় ডাক বহনে ভারতীয় জাহাজ কোম্পানীকে অধিকার দেওয়া হইয়াছে, কিন্তু ভারত সরকারের অন্য সমস্ত কনট্রাক্ট পি এণ্ড ও এবং বি আই এস এন কোম্পানীকে দেওয়া হইয়া থাকে। গত বৎসর ফেডারেশন অব ইণ্ডিয়ান চেম্বার্স অব কমার্স দেশীয় জাহাজের উন্নতির জন্য গবর্ণমেণ্টের নিকট বৎসরে মাত্র দশ লক্ষ টাকা

[*Translated from the "Ananda Bazar Patrika," (Calcutta), dated 14th June, 1936.*]

(Commerce Editor)

111

In our last two articles, we have discussed the absolute control exercised by foreigners in inland rivers, in coast ports and in traffic with other countries and also how Indians due to Government opposition, failed in their various efforts in obtaining the sole right of the Indian shipping at least on the Indian coast.

This article will discuss what kind of financial help, direct or indirect, for the betterment of their shipping industry, is being rendered by the other Governments of the world and the indifference of the Indian Government in contrast to them on the same subject.

It has been mentioned before that no other country is so very prosperous in shipping as England. According to the statement of Lloyd's in the latter part of 1935, the total tonnage of all the big ships of the capacity of more than hundred tons in the whole world was 6 crores and 64 lakhs of tons. Out of this, the tonnage of British ships alone was more than 2 crores of tons. During the latter half of that year, the total tonnage of ships of the capacity of more than 400 tons, was 3 crores of tons and of this, ships of one crore and 8 lakhs of tons, *i.e.*, 36.1 per cent of the whole belonged to England alone. In 1928 and 1929 England had imported merchandise of the nett value of 13 crores of pounds (Rupees 173 crores and 33 lakhs) to her profit.

Though the revenue of England from shipping has comparatively decreased owing to the present trade depression and international competition, England in 1934 has earned an income of 7 crores of pounds, from this source only. One of the principal causes of England's unrivalled position in shipping, is the Governmental assistance. It is doubtful whether England to-day would have been so prosperous if the British Government had not passed Navigation Acts at various periods, by creating a trade monopoly

in shipping since two hundred years ago. Nor is that all, though thereafter, the Navigation Act was repealed, the British Government for further progress of their shipping industry has spent enormous sums on account of Naval Reserve and Admiralty Subvention. Besides this, from the year 1903 to 1927, Britain had granted an annual subsidy of 23 lakhs of rupees out of the Government revenue, to a British shipping company named Cunard Steamships Company. Over and above that, the Government has granted a loan of 26 lakhs of pounds to that company at a reduced rate of 2 per cent. for the ship-building industry. Out of this sum, the Cunard Company built two very big ships, namely the " Lusitania " and the " Mauretania." From February 1934 the British Government is giving an annual grant of 20 lakhs of pounds to British steamship companies. The British Government also granted a loan of 30 lakhs of pounds, for the building of the big ship, the " Queen Mary," which is the subject of much talk this day. Besides these instances of direct assistance, the British Government also helps enormously their national steamship companies with the favour of mail carrying contracts. Further, the British Government is patronising their companies by granting the contracts of carrying mails in other parts of the Empire and in India also. When we consider these enormous subsidies, we find nothing astonishing in the prosperity of the British steamship companies.

Not only England, but other countries also are very keen in helping their national shipping companies. In the United States of America, the national shipping companies enjoy regularly Government subsidies. Recently, President Roosevelt has announced a grant of 3 crores of dollars to the national shipping companies for the carriage of mails. At the present rate of freight, the ships cannot earn more than 30 lakhs of dollars for mails, but President Roosevelt is allowing them 2 crores and 70 lakhs of dollars more for their benefit.

After the commencement of Mussolini's reign in Italy, the shipowners there are enjoying a grant of 30 lakhs of pounds annually. As a result of this, Italy has begun to occupy a position among

the most prosperous countries in the world. In France also, the shipowners receive a grant of 50 lakhs of pounds per annum. A few days ago, France passed a Bill for further help to their shipping industry. Recently, Spain, Belgium and Holland have also taken steps for the betterment of their shipping industry. Even Canada and South Africa within the British Empire have resolved to organise a joint shipping company with the help of their respective Governments. In these countries, the shipping industries not only receive direct Government subsidies but as in England, they also get the benefit of mail carrying contracts and advances of loans at a very low rate.

In this connection, the example of Japan is worth mentioning here. Japan before the war with China in 1896, helped her shipping industry with a sum of fifteen and a half lakhs of rupees per year. And after the war with China, Japan passed a bill for organising a fleet of ships of her own. A provision was made in that bill that a grant of 12 yens per ton for a steel ship of the capacity up to a thousand tons and 20 yens per ton for a ship of the capacity of more than thousand tons would be made by the Government. Besides, it was settled that if a ship be fitted with a Japanese engine, an additional grant of 5 yens for each horse power will be given. In the subsequent period, these grants were enhanced in various ways and by passing another bill in 1910 ample reservation of the Japanese coastal trade was established.

At present, the Japanese Government pays a subsidy of 10 lakhs of pounds per annum to help the shipping industry. Owing to such assistance, Japan has made wonderful progress in the shipping industry and in the Pacific and the Indian Oceans also; even England is experiencing difficulty in competing with Japan. It will suffice to say that in 1906, Japan had only 13 shipping companies and these companies had only 344 ships of the total capacity of 4 lakhs and 91 thousand tons. But by 1919, some 56 companies were organised and in the same year the number of Japanese ships and their capacity for carrying goods came to 1542 and 13 lakhs and 97 thousand tons respectively. From 1919 until now, the capacity of Japanese ships has been increased up to 41 lakhs of

tons, that is Japan has increased her mercantile fleet by 8 times within 30 years.

What a gulf of difference in the condition of India is found in comparison with the other countries of the world. In spite of a movement for 25 years the India Government has not given direct help out of its own coffers for the improvement or upkeep of this infant industry, nor has granted a loan even of a single pie.

The Government has vehemently opposed Indians in their attempts for development of shipping by reserving the coastal trade and also saving themselves from the unfair competition of the foreigners. Moreover, the Government made stringent provisions in the new Reforms Act for suppressing the Indian shipping industry. Indian shipping companies are deprived even of the benefit of carrying mails and Government goods. Only recently, an Indian company has been granted the right of carrying part of the Burma mails. But the other contracts of the Indian Government are given to the P. & O. and the B. I. S. N. Co.

Last year, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce made an appeal to the Government for a loan of 10 lakhs of rupees and while the Government is spending crores of rupees on the Radio and Air Services, yet the appeal of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce regarding the shipping industry has proved of no avail. The amount of subsidies which the Government now pays for carrying mails and other Government cargo, if paid to Indian companies, would considerably improve their position. But in this respect, every attempt and appeal of the Indian companies has been futile. So long as India will not acquire Swaraj by getting rid of foreign control, their prospects will be hopeless.

[*Reprinted from the Bombay Chronicle (Bombay), dated 25th May,* 1936.]

LEGISLATION TO CONTROL COASTAL TRAFFIC

SAFEGUARD AGAINST UNFAIR COMPETITION

The following bill to control the coastal traffic of India was introduced in the Indian Legislative Assembly and the Council of State :—

Whereas it is expedient to encourage the development of an Indian mercantile marine.

And whereas for this purpose it is expedient to control unfair competition in the coastal traffic of India.

It is hereby enacted as follows :—

(1) This Act may be called the Control of Coastal Traffic of India Act, 1935.

(2) It extends to the whole of the coastal traffic of British India and of the continent of India.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the Governor-General-in-Council may, by notification in the Gazette of India, appoint.

2. When the Governor-General-in-Council is satisfied from a complaint, report or otherwise that unfair competition exists in the coastal traffic of British India or of the continent of India by the lowering of the usual rates of fare or freight or by the grant of rebates or other concessions in any way whatsoever, it shall, subject to the provisions of the Government of India Act, be lawful for him to prescribe, from time to time, by rules published in the Gazette of India, the minimum rates of fare or freight between any ports in India or to prohibit by notification published in the said Gazette the grant of any rebate or concession which in his opinion amounts to unfair competition.

3. Any person who in the opinion of the Governor-General-in-Council contravenes any such rule or prohibition shall be

punished with fine which may extend to Rs. 10,000, and shall also be liable to be debarred from taking any ship into any port in India under the control of the Government of India or of any Provincial Government for such period or under such conditions as the Governor-General-in-Council may direct.

EXPLANATION.—A person shall include any company or association or body of individuals whether incorporated or not.

4. The Governor-General-in-Council may, by notification, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act. In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely :—

(*a*) for the procedure for complaint against or report about unfair competition,

(*b*) for enquiry into such complaint or report,

(*c*) for the imposition of the penalty of refusal of entry of any ship into any port and for the enforcement thereof.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS.

This Bill is intended to remove a possible impediment to the growth and development of Indian mercantile marine. There is no question of any discrimination between British and Indian shipping. Past experience, however, shows that a well-established powerful Company engaged in coastal traffic can easily put a new venture out of action by unfair competition, *e.g.*, rate-cutting, grant of rebates, etc. The fear of unfair competition deters Indian capital being invested in coastal shipping. If the Governor-General-in-Council be given power to prevent such competition, the fear will be largely allayed and a new line of commercial activity may be opened out to Indians. By this Bill, power is given to the Governor-General-in-Council, when he is satisfied that unfair competition exists, to fix minimum rates of fare and freight or to prohibit the grant of rebates or other conces-

sions which are calculated to reduce such minimum rates. Contravention of any rule prescribed by the Governor-General-in-Council or any direction given by him with regard to the grant of concessions is made punishable with fine or refusal of entry to an Indian port.

[*Reprinted from the Bombay Chronicle (Bombay), dated 6th June,* 1936.]

DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN SHIPPING

We published the other day the text of a Bill relating to the control of coastal traffic, which was introduced in the Council of State by Mr. P. N. Sapru and the Legislative Assembly by Sir A. H. Ghuznavi last April. We understand that this Bill is likely to come up at the Simla session of the Central Legislature when the Government will have to disclose their attitude towards the measure. The object of this Bill is to encourage the development of an Indian mercantile marine and its principle is to prevent unfair competition in the coastal traffic of India. The method proposed to check such unfair competition is by prescribing minimum rates of fare and freight between ports in India and prohibiting undercutting and underquoting of such rates through grant of private rebates or concessions. The authors of the Bill have been at some pains to make it clear that the Bill is not discriminatory in its nature and has, therefore, naturally received the support of the Committee of the U. P. Liberals, who consider it a " more modest " measure than the famous Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill. We have never been able to endorse the opinion that the Coastal Reservation Bill was discriminatory and for this view we have the authority not only of a Provincial Government, but of the Law Officers of the Crown. If it was at all possible to do so, we would have liked a similar Bill to be on the legislative anvil before the new Constitution is inaugurated, but we are afraid such a course is impossible owing to the natural anxiety of the Congress Party to deal with political disabilities like repressive legislation and the dilatory tactics of the Treasury Benches.

It is extremely doubtful, of course, whether any effective measure of maritime protection will, at all, be feasible under the Constitution, which will be shortly set up. Impressed, therefore, by the commercial safeguards in the Government of India Act, 1935, Sir A. H. Ghuznavi and Mr. Sapru want to resort to some other method for assisting Indian shipping, that is, by removing

one of the impediments in the way of its development. Their Bill is not so much a positive one for developing Indian shipping as a negative one to remove an obstacle, which has beset the path of new Indian enterprises all these years. Rate-wars have been a well known method of British shipping combines to oust new Indian shipping companies and the Bill, therefore, seeks to prevent such ruinous and unfair rate-wars. No attempts to create and develop an Indian merchant marine can possibly succeed until fair competition is allowed to come into play by Government making the waging of rate-wars impossible. A favourable atmosphere will thereby be created and more capital will be consequently drawn into shipping enterprises owing to the greater confidence engendered.

But it is necessary to emphasize that further progress can only be guaranteed by the application of well-known direct and indirect methods employed by various maritime countries to encourage national shipping. Amongst such direct methods, we may mention, for instance, preferential treatment to Indian concerns in regard to mail contracts, carriage of Government and railway stores and materials, passages of Government officials, Central and Provincial, Civil and Military as well as subsidies for participation in the overseas trade of the country. The most universal and recognised method of developing national shipping is, of course, the reservation of the coastal trade of India to Indian vessels, but if this method is unacceptable to Government, they can at least introduce without delay a system of licensing ships on the Indian coast so as to ensure that Indian tonnage would carry the major portion of the coastal traffic both in regard to passengers and cargo. The method of licensing tonnage on the Indian coast formed one of the important recommendations of the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee and was also considered at the Shipping Conference of 1930, where Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy, emphasized the need of " economic employment " of coastal shipping along with progressive increase in Indian shipping. This demand has received the support of all the Indian commercial bodies and the case for maritime protection was ably presented at the annual session of

the Federation of Indian Chambers last year by such speakers as Messrs. D. P. Khaitan, Ramdas Pantulu and B. Das. A resolution on this subject was also passed in the Council of State in February, 1935. Government have through their accredited representatives accepted more than once, both inside the Legislature and outside, the policy for the development of an Indian mercantile marine both in the coastal and overseas trade of India, and it is now incumbent on them to devise ways and means of implementing that policy.

Reprinted from "Bandemataram" (Calcutta), 30th June, 1936.

ভারতের উপকূল বাণিজ্য

ভারতের রাষ্ট্রনৈতিক অধীনতার ন্যায় তাহার বাণিজ্যিক অনধিকারও যেমন জাতীয় হীনতার পরিচায়ক তেমনি অপরিসীম লজ্জা ও বেদনাদায়ক। ভারতের বিশাল সমুদ্র উপকূলে ভারতবাসীর বাণিজ্যিক অধিকার আছে বটে, কিন্তু সে অধিকার অপ্রতিহত বা সংরক্ষিত নহে, তাহা পদে পদে পরাধীনতার লজ্জা ও নিষেধ-বিধির দ্বারা নিয়ন্ত্রিত। ১৮৮০ সালের ভারতীয় উপকূল বাণিজ্যের পাঁচ আইনে ভারতের বিশাল বারিধী উপকূলের বাণিজ্যিক পথ সকলের জন্যই উন্মুক্ত করা হইয়াছে। এই অবাধ অধিকার প্রদানে অবশ্যম্ভাবী ফল যাহা তাহা ফলিয়াছে। প্রভাবশালী বৈদেশিক বণিকদিগের অসম প্রতিযোগিতার চাপে ভারতের জাহাজী ব্যবসায় আজও মাথা তুলিয়া উঠিতে পারে নাই, ভারতবাসীকে তাহার বিশাল উপকূলে দাঁড়াইয়া সমুদ্রের লহরী গুণিয়াই সন্তুষ্ট হইতে হইয়াছে।

ভারতীয় বাণিজ্যিক জাহাজ কমিটির নিকট যে সব সাক্ষী সাক্ষ্য দিয়াছিলেন, তাঁহারা সকলেই একবাক্যে ভারতের সমুদ্র উপকূলে শুধুমাত্র ভারতবাসীদিগকেই বাণিজ্যিক অধিকার প্রদানের প্রস্তাব করিয়াছিলেন। ১৯৩০ সালে ভারতের তদানীন্তন বড়লাট লর্ড আরউইন জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ী সম্মিলনের সভাপতিরূপে বলিয়াছিলেন যে, ভারতের উপকূল বাণিজ্যে ভারতীয় জাহাজের সংখ্যাই বৃদ্ধি হওয়া বাঞ্ছনীয় এবং প্রচলিত নিয়মকানুনগুলির এমনভাবে পরিবর্ত্তন করা কর্ত্তব্য যাহাতে জাহাজের কর্ম্মচারী হিসাবে অধিক সংখ্যক ভারতবাসীকে নিযুক্ত করা যাইতে পারে। কিন্তু ভারতীয় বাণিজ্যিক জাহাজ কমিটির সুপারিশ অথবা স্বয়ং বড়লাট লর্ড আরউইনের সুচিন্তিত পরামর্শ সবই অরণ্যে রোদনে পর্য্যবসিত হইয়াছে। কারণ নাবালক ভারতবাসীর অভিভাবক ভবীরা তাহাতে ভোলেন নাই। ইহার দৃষ্টান্ত স্বরূপ ভারতের নূতন সংস্কৃত শাসনতন্ত্রের কথা উল্লেখ করা যাইতে পারে। বাণিজ্যে কোনরূপ বৈষম্য নীতি চলিবে না, সংস্কৃত শাসনতন্ত্রে এই মহৎ বিধান প্রযুক্ত হইলেও উহা এমন কৌশলের সহিত রচনা করা হইয়াছে যাহাতে প্রতাপশালী বৈদেশিক বণিকদিগের প্রতিযোগিতার গণ্ডী কাটাইয়া দেশীয় শিশু জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলি সহজে মাথা তুলিয়া দাঁড়াইতে পারিবে বলিয়া মনে হয় না।

Reprinted from "Bandemataram" (Calcutta), 30th June, 1936.

ভারতীয় জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ীদিগকে স্বদেশের উপকূল বাণিজ্যে বৈদেশিক প্রতিপত্তিশালী বণিকদিগের ব্যবসায়ীকেও ভাড়ার হারের অন্যায় প্রতিযোগী হইতে রক্ষা করিয়া পৃথিবীর অন্যান্য সভ্যদেশের ন্যায় ভারতকেও তাঁহার উপকূল বাণিজ্যে সর্ব্বময় কর্তৃত্ব প্রদানের জন্য এবং তাহার ক্রমোন্নতির পথের কণ্টক দূর করিবার জন্য ভারতবাসীগণ ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থা পরিষদে বহুদিন হইতে আন্দোলন করিয়া আসিতেছে। কিন্তু ভারতের উপকূলে বৈদেশিক বণিকদিগকে অবাধ বাণিজ্যের অধিকারচ্যুত করিলে ইংরাজ বণিকদেরও তাহাতে স্বার্থহানি ঘটিবে এই আশঙ্কায় গবর্ণমেণ্ট এতদিন ভারতবাসীর সে সব আবেদন নিবেদনে কর্ণপাত করেন নাই বরং তাহা উপেক্ষাই করিয়া আসিয়াছেন। নয় বৎসর পূর্ব্বে ভারতের উপকূল বাণিজ্য ভারতবাসীদিগের জন্য সংরক্ষিত করিবার নিমিত্ত হাজী সাহেব যে বিল পেশ করিয়াছিলেন সদাশয় গবর্ণমেণ্টের তাহা মনঃপুত হয় নাই। তাহার পর এই নয় বৎসর কালের মধ্যে পৃথিবীর অন্যান্য সভ্যদেশের ন্যায় ভারতকে তাহার উপকূল বাণিজ্যে অপ্রতিহত অধিকার দিবার জন্য প্রতি বৎসরই ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থা পরিষদে বহু আলোচনা ও বাকবিতণ্ডা হইয়াছে, কিন্তু ভারতবাসীর দুর্ভাগ্যক্রমে আজও তাহা ফলপ্রসূ হয় নাই।

ভারতের সমুদ্র উপকূলে ভারতীয় জাহাজগুলি হালে পানি না পাইলেও ব্যবস্থা পরিষদের বে-সরকারী সদস্যগণ কিন্তু আজও একেবারে হাল ছাড়িয়া দেন নাই। ব্যবস্থা পরিষদের সদস্য স্যর আব্দুল হালিম গজনভী ও রাষ্ট্রপরিষদের সদস্য মিঃ পি, এন সাপ্রু ভারতের উপকূল বাণিজ্যে ভারতবাসীর প্রতি সুবিচারের আকাঙ্ক্ষায় উভয় পরিষদের গত এপ্রিল মাসের অধিবেশনে একখানি বিল পেশ করিয়াছেন। এই বিলে কাহারও প্রতি কোনরূপ সুবিধা বৈষম্যের বা পক্ষপাতিত্বের প্রশ্রয় দেওয়া হয় নাই। বরং তাহা নিবারণেরই প্রস্তাব করা হইয়াছে। ব্যবস্থা পরিষদ ও রাষ্ট্রপরিষদের আগামী সিমলা অধিবেশনে এই বিলের আলোচনা উঠিবে। ভারতের উপকূলে কোন বৈদেশিক জাহাজ কোম্পানী যাহাতে ভাড়া কিংবা অন্য কোন বিষয়ে ভারতীয় জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলির সহিত অসঙ্গত প্রতিযোগিতা করিয়া তাহার ভবিষ্যত উন্নতির পথ প্রতিরুদ্ধ করিতে না পারে ইহাই এই বিলের উদ্দেশ্য। বড়লাট যদি বুঝিতে পারেন যে, উপরোক্ত কোনরূপ অসম প্রতিযোগিতা চলিতেছে

তাহা হইলে তিনি সর্ব্বনিম্ন ভাড়ার হার নির্দ্দিষ্ট করিয়া দিতে পারিবেন এবং রিবেট প্রভৃতি অন্য কোন প্রকার সুবিধা দানও প্রতিরোধ করিতে পারিবেন। বিলখানির উদ্দেশ্য যে মহৎ এবং সর্ব্বথা সমর্থনযোগ্য ইহা বলাই বাহুল্য। হাজী সাহেবের পক্ষপাতিত্বমূলক বিলখানি গ্রহণে গবর্ণমেণ্ট কার্পণ্য করিলেও গজনভী সাহেবের এই বিলখানিকে অনায়াসেই গ্রহণ করিয়া ভারতীয় জাহাজী ব্যবসায়ের ভবিষ্যত উন্নতির পথ নিষ্কণ্টক করিতে পারেন।

প্রস্তাবিত বিলখানিতে ভারতীয় ও ব্রিটিশ জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলির মধ্যে কোনরূপ ব্যবহার বৈষম্যের বালাই নাই। ইহাতে বৈদেশিক ও ভারতীয় উভয় জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলিকেই ভারতের সমুদ্র উপকূলে সমভাবে বাণিজ্যিক অধিকার প্রদানের এবং ব্রিটিশ অথবা ভারতীয় নির্ব্বিশেষে যে কেহ অসঙ্গত প্রতিযোগিতা করিলে তাহাকেই দণ্ডদানের প্রস্তাব করা হইয়াছে। এতদ্ব্যতীত ভারতীয় অথবা অন্য কোন বৈদেশিক জাহাজ কোম্পানী যদি ব্রিটিশ জাহাজ কোম্পানীর সহিত অন্যায় প্রতিযোগিতায় অবতীর্ণ হয় তবে তাহারও দণ্ড বিধানের ব্যবস্থা করা হইয়াছে। অবৈধ প্রতিযোগিতা নিবারণে বড়লাটের হস্তে যে ক্ষমতা ন্যস্ত হইয়াছে তাহাতে উপকূল বাণিজ্যে ভারতীয় মূলধন নিয়োগের যে আশঙ্কা এতদিন বিদ্যমান ছিল তাহা অনায়াসে নিবারিত হইতে পারিবে। গবর্ণমেণ্ট কর্ত্তৃক সর্ব্বনিম্ন ভাড়া ধার্য্য করিবার প্রস্তাবটীও নূতন নহে, ১৯৩০ সালের সংশোধিত ইংল্যাণ্ড ষ্টীম নেভিগেশন আইনে ভারত গবর্ণমেণ্ট এই নীতি ইতিপূর্ব্বে গ্রহণ করিয়াছেন। সুতরাং প্রস্তাবিত বিলের ন্যায় এরূপ একখানি নিরপেক্ষ ও সুসঙ্গত বিধি বিধান সম্বলিত বিল গ্রহণে গবর্ণমেণ্টের যে কি আপত্তি থাকিতে পারে তাহা আমাদের সহজ বুদ্ধির অগম্য।

ভারতের শিশু জাহাজ ব্যবসায়ের সহিত প্রভাবশালী বৈদেশিক জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলির অসঙ্গত প্রতিযোগিতার দৃষ্টান্ত বিরল নহে। এই অবৈধ প্রতিযোগিতায় ভারতীয় শিশু জাহাজ ব্যবসায় কিভাবে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হইতেছে ষ্টেটসম্যান পত্রিকায় ভূতপূর্ব্ব সম্পাদক স্যার আলফ্রেড ওয়াটসন এবং মহাত্মা গান্ধী গোল-টেবিল বৈঠকে তাহা অকুণ্ঠ ভাষায় বর্ণনা করিয়াছেন। এই অসম প্রতিযোগিতার পথ নিরুদ্ধ করিতে না পারিলে দেশীয় জাহাজ ব্যবসায়ের আধিক্য ও উন্নতির আশা যে সুদূরপরাহত তাহা বলাই বাহুল্য। ভারতের নূতন বড়লাট লর্ড

Translated from the Bandemataram (Calcutta) 30th June, 1936.

লিংলিথগো ভারতের কৃষি প্রভৃতি উন্নতি বিধানের জন্য যেরূপে মনোযোগী হইয়াছেন আশা করি ভারতের শিশু জাহাজ ব্যবসায়ও তাঁহার সে সহানুভূতি লাভে বঞ্চিত হইবে না। গজনভী সাহেব ও মিঃ সাপ্রু যে বিলখানি পেশ করিয়াছেন, ব্যবস্থা ও রাষ্ট্রীয় পরিষদের আগামী অধিবেশনে যাহাতে উহা নিরাপত্তিতেই গৃহীত হয় সে বিষয়ে তিনি একটু কৃপাদৃষ্টি করিলেই বিলের প্রস্তাবকদ্বয়ের সদিচ্ছা অনায়াসে পূর্ণ হইতে পারে এবং ভারতবাসীর বহুদিনের একটী অভিযোগের নিরাকরণ হইতে পারে।

Translated from the Bandemataram (Calcutta), 30th June, 1936.

COASTAL TRADE OF INDIA

The commercial inferiority like the political dependence of India is immensely disgraceful and painful. Indians have, of course, some commercial rights in the vast coast of India but those rights are neither predominent nor reserved, and are at every step restricted by rules and regulations. By the Indian Coastal Trade Act No. V of 1880 the extensive coast lines of India have been open to all. The inevitable result of this unrestricted liberty to trade has not been without its consequences. The Indian shipping industry has not as yet been able to make a stronghold in the Indian coast on account of unfair competition of foreign shipping firms. Indians have had to remain satisfied in counting the waves of the ocean.

Those who gave evidence before the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee have all in one voice approved of the sole right of Indians to have their own shipping on the coast. As the President of the Shipping Merchants' Association in 1930, Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy of India, said that the number of Indian ships should be increased and that the existing rules and regulations should be modified so that Indians in a large number be employed as officers in the ships. But the recommendations of the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee as well as the well-considered opinion of the then Viceroy himself, fell on deaf ears. The reason is that the so-called guardians of Indians are not so careless of their own interests. To justify our views, we can mention the case of newly reformed constitution. 'No discrimination would be made in affairs of trade' is indeed a noble rule in the reformed scheme. But the ingenuity with which the point has been fabricated makes it a doubtful case for the newborn native shipping companies to float in the face of competition of the powerful foreign traders.

Indians for years past are agitating in the Assembly to protect the national shipping companies from the unjustifiable competition of the influential foreign interests and to give them such right in the coastal trade as is in other civilised countries. But the Govern-

ment has long turned a deaf ear, nay, has rather trifled with this demand thinking that if foreign merchants are ousted from trading freely in the coast of India, it might be harmful to the interest of the British merchants as well. Nine years ago, Mr. Haji introduced a Bill in order to reserve the right of trading on the coast of India only, which, of course, could not please the Government. Thence, for nine long years the agitation has been kept alive in the Assembly, where heated discussions were often made but unfortunately for Indians, these are still ineffective.

On the coast of India, although Indian ships have not, as yet, been able to carve out a place for themselves, the non-official members are not totally hopeless. Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, a Member of the Legislative Assembly and Mr. P. N. Sapru, a Member of the Council of State, have introduced a Bill in both the Houses during the Session last April, in order to have justice for Indians in the coastal trade. In that Bill no partiality or injustice has been done to anybody and this will be discussed in the next sessions of the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. The aim of the Bill is to prevent foreign shipping companies from doing anything as regards concession in freight, etc., so as to hamper the future prospects of the national shipping firms by unfair competition. If the Governor-General suspects that an unfair and unequal competition is going on, His Excellency should exercise his power to fix the lowest rate of freight or to stop any concession in the shape of rebate, etc. That the Bill is well-designed and fit to be supported by all means, hardly requires any further explanation. Although Government has shown obstinacy in regard to the Bill of Mr. Haji owing to its discriminatory clauses, they may accept the Bill of Sir Ghuznavi to clear off all obstacles in the path of future development of the Indian shipping industry.

As regards the proposed Bill, it might be said that it is free from all guilt of taking one-sided views in the conflict of the Indian and British shipping companies. It has made provisions for the Indian and foreign companies irrespective of their nationalities, to trade with equal right on the Indian coast and it also

declares that anyone irrespective of his nationality (whether British or Indian) should be punishable by law, if found guilty of resorting to unfair competition. The power vested in the Viceroy to put an end to such illegal competition, now dispels one obstacle, namely, the fear of risking Indian capital, felt so long in the coastal trade. The provision which directs the Government to reserve to itself the right of fixing the lowest rate of freight, is also not new. The principle has already been accepted in the amended Inland Steam Navigation Act of 1930 by the Government of India. It is, therefore, beyond our comprehension how Government can hesitate to accept a Bill, so impartial in its nature and replete with well-reasoned provisions.

Examples of unfair competition of foreign shipping companies with infant shipping firms of India, are not rare. By this unfair competition, how far do the national companies suffer was already explained in a straightforward way by Sir Alfred Watson, Editor of the *Statesman* and by Mahatma Gandhi in the last Round Table Conference. It requires hardly any mention that the hope of increase in the number of national shipping companies and the hope of their future prospects will be a thing of the distant future if this method of unfair competition be not prevented for ever. We hope Lord Linlithgow, the present Viceroy, will not fail to encourage the national shipping companies just as he is trying to improve the agricultural condition of India. His sympathetic turn of mind towards the Bill being passed smoothly in the next session of the Assembly, can make the good will of the two movers of the Bill effective and can thus redress one grievance of Indians which is of long standing.

Reprinted from the Commercial Gazette (Calcutta), dated 22nd June, 1936.

PROBLEM OF INDIAN SHIPPING

A strong and prosperous mercantile marine has always played a large role in the economic life of a nation. Development of national shipping by State assistance and also by the reservation of coastal and overseas trade to same, has, therefore, been the prime concern of every progressive nation of the world. An enquiry instituted by the League of Nations in 1931 revealed the fact that about 27 out of 31 maritime countries of the world have by statutory measures provided for the reservation of coastal trade to their own shipping. The remaining four have preferred to remain without any statutory provision, perhaps because they do not need any such legislative measure to protect or promote the interests of their own shipping. This is at least true in the case of Great Britain which is not in the list of 27 countries having statutory provision for the reservation of coastal trade to their own shipping. The facts of the situation there do not necessitate the framing of any such legislation. 98% of the coastal trade of the U. K. is actually carried on by British vessels, and there is the supreme consciousness that so powerful is the British mercantile marine that it would be the height of folly for any other nation to compete with her in this regard. Though there is no statutory provision for the reservation of coastal trade to its own shipping in Great Britain, yet the State there has all along been helping the national shipping with subventions, subsidies and mail contracts. It is indeed only quite recently that the British Government gave a loan of £3,000,000 for building the giant cunarder now known as the "Queen Mary," and also granted subsidies of £2,000,000 to British tramp shipping. And this has been the case with other nations as well. Indeed, in the House of Commons on 1st February, 1935, it was given out by Mr. Walter Runciman, President of the Board of Trade, that "the U. S. A. and France are each giving a shipping subsidy of £5,000,000, Italy £3,000,000 and Japan £1,000,000, while the Dominions had a shipping policy which was nationalistic in

character." As a matter of fact to whatever points of the compass we turn to we find nations of the world,—Americans, French, Italians, Spanish, Belgians, Dutch and Japanese—all restlessly endeavouring to build up a well-equipped and efficient mercantile marine with State assistance of various kinds. It is really edifying to note here that British shipping did first assert itself in Indian waters mainly with the help of a subsidy given by Sir Bartley Frere to William Mackinon.

And what has India done on the same score? What statutory measures have the Indian Government uptill now adopted, and what subsidies and subventions have they given to protect and promote the interests of India's indigenous shipping? Sad really it is to note that the answer to these question is: Nothing (spelt in big Capitals). Uptill now there have been floated 32 Indian shipping companies to carry on the inland and coastal trade of India, but on account of British competition 23 of them have already gone to the wall. Only 9 remain,—and they too are yet suffering the onslaught of British shipping companies. Whenever a new Indian shipping company is started to take some share in the inland and coastal traffic of India, the British companies take to measures that are anything but *fair* and *just*. They would at once launch a rate-war with the new comer, and would not rest content until and unless the latter is completely crushed. The rate is stepped down to such a ridiculously uneconomic level that it becomes hopeless for a new company to try conclusions with a long-established British company with its Croesus-like resources. Naturally the newborn babe withers away and dies even in its swaddling clothes. Then there is the system of "deferred rebate" under which a shipper is allowed 10 per cent. rebate on the freight he has paid if he continually avails himself of the services of a British company for a certain number of months. This method naturally gives an inducement to the shippers to use the ships of a British company continuously for a long period, and it thus constitutes an effective check to their patronising the Indian ships. Lastly, there are the British marine insurance companies, who perhaps in collusion with the shipping companies,

do not as a matter of rule insure any shipment if the same is sent in a vessel owned by an Indian company. This also effectively deters a shipper from sending his shipments by an Indian vessel.

In the light of what the nations in other parts of the world are doing for safeguarding the interests of national shipping, it looks rather surprising that there should be so many iniquitous barriers against the development of indigenous shipping in this country. It is not that the authorities are unaware of all this. As a matter of fact there has been persistent agitation during the last fifteen years or so for the adoption of suitable measures for the promotion and protection of the Indian shipping industry, but the authorities have always turned a deaf ear to the public demand on this score. Official Committees and Commissions have also made identical recommendation, but these too have also been turned down by the Government. As a matter of fact it was the Indian Fiscal Commission which in 1921 considered in common with that of other industries, the case of the Indian shipping industry as well, and the system of " deferred rebate " as allowed by the British shipping company was considered by them as so iniquitous and detrimental to the interests of the indigenous shipping industry that in very strong terms they recommended to the Government the immediate adoption of statutory measure to abolish the same. A decade and a half has elapsed since then, and the Indian shipping companies are to-day in the thick of the same plight in which the Fiscal Commission found them during their enquiry in 1921. The Government have not preferred to lift even their little finger, to offer any solace or succour to the indigenous shipping industry. Rather in 1923 to divert public agitation on this score for the moment the Government appointed a Mercantile Marine Committee to enquire into this question. Although in the personnel of this Committee were included some of the distinguished personalities of the British shipping industry, yet the position of the indigenous shipping industry was found to be so anomalous in this country that they even did not hesitate to state it definitely and unequivocally that " the coasting trade of a country was universally regarded as a domestic trade and conceded India's right moral as well as legal

for the reservation of her coastal trade to herself." Like the recommendation of the Fiscal Commission that of the Mercantile Marine Committee too proved to be of no matter of concern to the Government. It was when the public in this country became somewhat convinced of the apathy of the Government to take any measure on their own initiative to redress the grievances of the Indian shipping industry that in 1928 Mr. Sarabhai Nemchand Haji introduced in the Legislative Assembly a measure known as the Indian Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill. It is now matter of common knowledge why and how that bill failed to be passed into an Act. Although Mr. Haji had introduced the bill after having consulted the Law Officers of the Government twice, who considered it within the powers of the Indian Legislature to enact such a measure yet when it was found that it would to some extent impair the virtual monopolistic supremacy of the British shipping companies in the coastal waters of India, it was turned down on the ground that it stood *ultra vires* of Section 736 of the British Merchant Shipping Act. Later on when the competition between the British and the Indian shipping companies became more keen, Sir Joseph Bhore, the then Commerce Member of the Government of India, intervened and it was at his persuasion and pressure that an agreement was arrived at between the two rival interests. Referring to this working arrangement in the last year's annual general meeting of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Mr. D. P. Khaitan rightly observed: " I ask whether it redounds to the prestige of the Government of India that they should not rely on their own wide powers to protect and promote Indian shipping instead of merely trying to persuade, cajole, and appeal to British shipping interests to throw a few crumbs at Indian shipping interests in order to keep them quiet for the time being. I want to ask which is the more self-respecting and effective method. I know that this policy of pressure and persuasion is described as one of " friendly negotiations and co-operation" but I would remind the Government that this means nothing more than that Indians would be permitted to acquire only such share of the coastal trade as the British shipping interests are

graciously pleased to give up and part with of their own accord. What the public demand is not the preservation of a few struggling Indian enterprises to be kept alive through the favour and grace of British interests but the substantial participation of Indian shipping in the coastal and overseas trade of India and its definite and speedy expansion in the future."

Indeed, it is preposterous to suggest that a nascent national industry can ever hope to grow up on the mercies and sufferance of its strong foreign rivals. Yet instead of taking resort to the self-respecting and effective method of using their own wide powers to protect and promote the Indian shipping industry, the Government of India have curiously enough pinned their faith in the efficacy of such "friendly negotiations and co-operation" between the two antagonistic interests. Since this so-called working arrangement came into effect, resolutions have now and then been moved in both the Houses of the Indian Legislature, urging the Government to protect and promote the interests of the Indian shipping industry, but they have been turned down by the authorities on some pretext or other. The latest move in this direction, however, is a bill for the reservation of coastal traffic to Indian shipping introduced in the last year's Budget session of the Assembly by Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad. This measure is yet hanging fire. But a definite and effective action on this score has now,—more than at any time—become imperatively necessary in view of certain detrimental provisions in the new Government of India Act. Under the preposterous camouflage of "Reciprocity" it has been provided for in Clause 116 of the Act that if subsidies or bounties are granted to any Indian companies, their competing British rivals would also be entitled to the same. There is further a specific clause rendering it impossible to protect Indian shipping, or to employ Indian officers and engineers in ships plying on the Indian coast or to receive mail subsidies out of the Indian revenue. When the J. P. C. Report was published we raised in these columns a voice of protest against such constitutional provisions for keeping intact the monopoly of the British shipping interests in the Indian coastal waters to the grievous detriment of the

indigenous interests. Surely it is the height of ridicule to suggest that British shipping interests with their colossal resources should be accorded the same treatment as the Indian interests, particularly when the avowed and almost the declared policy of the former is to crush the latter. There is yet, therefore, time now to render the Indian shipping interest, some sort of effective assistance before the constitutional changes come into full force. Some concrete suggestions on this score were contained in a resolution moved by Mr. D. P. Khaitan at the Eighth Annual Session of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry held at Delhi on 30th March, 1935. The resolution *inter alia* urged upon the Government that (i) the share of Indian-owned and managed tonnage should be increased from 23·7 per cent. as at present to 51 per cent. of the total tonnage engaged in the coastal trade during the next five years and that the lifting of cargo on the coast by Indian shipping should be similarly increased from about 25 per cent. as at present to 51 per cent. on the whole coast during the next five years; (ii) as regards overseas trade Indian-owned and managed shipping should as first step be enabled to have 50 per cent. of the services between Madras and the Straits and between Karachi and Persian Gulf Ports during the next five years and that for this purpose a subsidy or bounty not exceeding 10 lakhs of rupees a year should be given to Indian-owned and managed vessels."

There is indeed nothing unseemly in the demand contained in the resolution cited above. It is in full consonance with the recommendations of the Indian Fiscal Commission and the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee, and also with those of the Conference on the working of the Dominion Legislation and Merchant Shipping of 1929. This last-named Conference recommended the abolition of all restraints on Dominion Parliaments in respect of merchant shipping and stated that there was no longer to be any doubt as to the full and complete power of any Dominion Parliament to enact legislation in respect of merchant shipping. Opinion was further expressed there to the effect that " the new position will be that each Dominion will amongst its other powers, have

full and complete legislative authority over all ships within its territorial waters or engaged in its coasting trade and also over its own registered ships both intra-territorially and extra-territorially." It was further observed there in that context that " as the position of India in these matters has always been to all intents and purposes identical with that of the Dominions, it is not anticipated that there would be any serious difficulty in applying the principle of our recommendations to India and we suggest that the question and the proper method of so doing should be considered by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Government of India." It is to be further observed that the demand for a subsidy of 10 lakhs of rupees for the development of Indian shipping in the foreign trade of India is neither an exorbitant nor an unfair one, when the Government are already spending collosal sums of money for the development of Civil Aviation and Broadcasting. We believe national shipping constitutes in a much more degree an integral part of the nation's economic life than either Civil Aviation or Broadcasting. More we wonder therefore, why national shipping should be left in the lurch?

Reprinted from the Commercial Gazette (Calcutta), dated 6th July, 1936.

RATE-WAR AND COASTAL SHIPPING

In our leading article on the Problem of Indian Shipping in the week before last we sought to give our readers an adequate idea of the unwholesome and uncongenial atmosphere in which Indian shipping has been left to work its destinies in the coastal waters of India. We indicated there clearly how from the very beginning Indian shipping has been exposed to the unfair competition of foreign companies, in her own waters. We pointed out how out of some 32 companies hitherto floated in this country, only 9 now remain. The rest have been ousted from the field by the unfair competition of the foreign shipping companies. It was stated in our last article that one of the most effective weapons in the armoury of the foreign shipping companies is the cutting down of rates to uneconomic levels. This deliberate and unfair aggression of the British shipping companies in the coastal waters of India was very focibly pointed out by Sir Alfred Watson, the former Editor of the *Statesman,* in the course of his evidence before the Joint Select Committee on Indian Reforms. Sir Alfred said: " I am bound to say speaking as a European that the Indians have a case for a large share in their coastal shipping and although I opposed the Bill (for Coastal Reservation) very strongly because it savoured of expropriation, I recognise that Indian Company after Indian Company which endeavoured to develop a coastal service has been financially shattered by the heavy combination of the British interests." That the Indians have a case for a large share in their coastal shipping has also been admitted by the Government of India. Thus on the 7th September, 1932, the then Commerce Member Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer made in the Legislative Assembly a pronouncement to the effect that " the Government are particularly anxious to facilitate the expansion of coastal trade of India in so far as that coastal trade is operated by Indian agencies and through the instrumentality of Indian capital." Four years earlier on the 23rd of September, 1929, another Commerce Member, Sir George Rainey in the course of a statement in the

Legislative Assembly also spoke for " an adequate participation of Indian shipping in the coastal and overseas trade of India." " That India should have its merchant marine and the ships of that mercantile marine should be officered as well as manned by Indians " was also voiced by no less a personality than Lord Irwin in the course of a speech delivered at the annual meeting of the Associated Chambers of Commerce held at Calcutta on the 27th of December, 1928.

It may here be recalled that to compose the differences between the several rival interests Lord Irwin held a Conference in January, 1930. There in that Conference too Lord Irwin said : " What is desired is to find, if possible, some measure which would effect an increase, a definite increase, in the number of Indian ships and a revision of the condition of their economic—if this is the right word—employment." In a *communique* issued by the Government of India on the 6th January, 1930, after the termination of the Shipping Conference, the Government emphasised that " they will take into consideration at an early date the issues raised in the discussion which took place at the Conference on the development of the Indian mercantile marine. The responsibility will rest with the Government of India of deciding what action should now be taken and whether any useful purpose would be served by inviting the interests concerned to meet again." But curious indeed that despite this fulsome assurance to help the development of Indian shipping at an early date no measure worth the name has yet been adopted by the Government of India to protect and promote the interests of indigenous shipping. On the other hand, as was pointed out in our last article there has been incorporated in the new Government of India Act definite provisions to give the rival British shipping interests the same privileges and opportunities to trade in the coastal waters of India as would be given to the indigenous shipping companies. Obvious it is then, that after the inauguration of the new Government it would not be possible for the children of the soil to have any full-fledged legislation for the promotion and protection of coastal shipping. Such a legislation therefore we must have now or never. That is why it rests with

every patriotic Indian to lend his support to the Bill for controlling unfair competition in the coastal traffic of India introduced in the last session of the Legislative Assembly by Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi and in the Council of State by Mr. P. N. Sapru. The Bill provides that " when the Governor-General is satisfied from a complaint, report or otherwise that unfair competition exists in the coastal traffic of British India or of the continent of India, by the lowering of the usual rate of fare or freight or by the grant of rebates or other concessions in any way whatsoever, it shall, subject to provisions of the Government of India Act, be lawful for him to prescribe, from time to time, by rules published in the *Gazette of India*, the minimum rates of fare or freight between any ports in India or to prohibit by notification published in the *Gazette of India* the grant of any rebate or concession which in his opinion amounts to unfair competition." As regards penalty it lays down that "any person who, in the opinion of the Governor-General-in-Council, contravenes any such rule or prohibition shall be punished with fine which may extend to Rs. 10,000 and shall also be liable to be debarred from taking any ship into any port in India under the control of the Government of India or of any Provincial Government for such period under such conditions as the Governor-General-in-Council may direct. It is apparent from the text of the Bill that the avowed object of it is to remove a serious impediment from the path of the growth and development of Indian mercantile marine, namely that of unfair competition by means of direct or indirect rate-cutting which like the sword of Damocles is always hanging over the head of the indigenous shipping industry. It is indeed no full measure for the growth and development of Indian shipping. Such a measure, if it is ever brought in the legislature, will be turned down like the Haji's Coastal Reservation Bill on the vague ground of " expropriation." Nonetheless Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi's Bill is a clear and definite step forward in the way of the advancement of Indian shipping. It marks moreover, a clear improvement on Act XIII of 1930 by which the Governor-General-in-Council was given power to fix the maximum and minimum rates for passenger fares and freight for goods in the

inland waters of India. Further by that measure the Local Government were given power to make rules providing for the appointment of Advisory Committees to advise the owners, agents and charterers of inland steam-vessels on questions affecting the interests of passengers and shippers of goods. In regard to the fixation of minimum rate it was however laid down that the Governor-General-in-Council would not take any action unless and until a particular company has proved it to the satisfaction of the former that some other company or companies had made a reduction of rates with the intention of forcing the other to cease from operation in the inland waters of India. But the rub of it is that it seldom lies within the capacity of a company to prove that the other company has reduced its rates with the intention of forcing it to retire from the field. As a matter of fact only one company has uptill now been able to prove this to the satisfaction of the Governor-General-in-Council. Nevertheless, it serves as a check on the deliberate aggression of any foreign company in the inland waters of India. Sir Abdul Halim's Bill widens the Governor-General-in-Council's power to intervene even when there is unfair competition in the coastal waters of India as against the inland waters as provided in the Act of 1930. The one is thus complementary to the other. And so long as the Government of India do not condescend to take any action for the full development of Indian shipping, between these two measures Indian shipping is likely to have some respite at least in the coastal and inland waters of India.

Reprinted from Financial Times (Calcutta), July, 1936.

FUTURE OF INDIAN SHIPPING

The news of the introduction of a bill in the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State, by *Sir A. H. Ghuznavi* and *Hon'ble P. N. Sapru,* for the prevention of rate-war amongst the shipping companies in the coastal waters of India, has again brought the problem of Indian shipping to the forefront. A strong and efficient mercantile marine has always been regarded as a great national asset. For the national defence, and for the proper growth of its trade and commerce, foreign and domestic, a merchant marine plays a great part in the life of a nation and the Government of most of the countries had to adopt every possible measure to ensure proper development of their mercantile marine. Most of the countries took the earliest opportunity to reserve the shipping right in the coastal waters to the national vessels. Study of the history of modern shipping will reveal the various modes of assistance which the Government of the countries have been rendering for the development of this great national industry. Besides coastal reservations, the shipping companies get various other assistance from the State, such as bounties, postal and admiralty subventions, and indirectly by the exemption from import duties on ship-building materials, port dues, and taxation, and by preferential railway rates. These stand in sad contrast with the part played by the Government of India, not for the promotion but for the destruction of our large national shipping industry. That is a matter of past history. For the last decade or so Indian shipowners, and the public in general have been persistently demanding Government assistance for the development of a national mercantile marine, by the preservation of India's coastal trade for the national shipping companies and protecting them against the rate-war competition of the foreign shipowners. It has been repeatedly brought to the notice of the Government that the system of deferred rebates and rate-wars, by the foreign companies, have been operating as a serious

obstacle to the existing national companies as well as to the entry of the new comers. The strong position of the existing British-owned shipping companies enables them to stamp out competition by rate-wars and other means, fair or foul. The competition had been so serious that out of the 32 Indian shipping companies so far established to carry on the coastal and inland trade, 23 companies had to close down and only 9 companies still exist—exist in name showing no symptom of progress.

India, with a long coast line and a growing import and export trade, has ample possibilities for the development of a prosperous mercantile marine for her own, provided the Government of the country so desires. The Indian Mercantile Marine Committee remarked in this connection, that "The coasting trade of a country is regarded universally as a domestic trade in which foreign flags cannot engage as of right but to which they may be admitted as an act of grace. It is admitted that the policy of British Dominions or possessions in regard to their own coasting trade must be determined by their local interests and we are of opinion that in the interests of the growth of an Indian mercantile marine it is necessary to close the coasting trade of this country to ships belonging to the foreign nations." So far we do not know of any action taken by the Government in this direction. The fate of Mr. Hazi's bill for the reservation of the coastal shipping, brought about by the united opposition of the Government and the vested interests, left no room for doubt about the real intention of the Government. The immense harm these non-Indian companies are doing to our national companies by the use of rebate system, have been, times without number, brought to the notice of the Government. The Indian Fiscal Commission (1923) recommended in no unmistakable terms to take early legislative measures against this pernicious system. The Commission remarked in para 132 of their report that " The system of shipping rebates is one of the strongest buttresses of monopoly. It is clear that an arrangement whereby a certain percentage of the freight paid is refundable to the shipper at the end of twelve months, provided no cargo is shipped by any outside line, is a powerful weapon for

maintaining a shipping monopoly. Other countries have recently legislated against this system and we think that the Government of India should make a thorough enquiry into the desirability of initiating similar legislation in India." The British companies took recourse to this policy everywhere within the Dominions. Now when the Dominions, with the solitary exception of this country, have the right and the power to adopt a shipping policy suitable to their own interests, the British shipping companies are finding it too hard to keep their flag flying on the Dominion waters. The forced withdrawal of the P. & O. Company from the line that linked Australia and New Zealand with North America, after a virtual monopoly for more than a century, eloquently demonstrates the earnestness on the part of the Dominions to have their own mercantile marine established. With the shipping trade in Dominions lost and with the growing competition from other non-British ships, the British companies are adopting every possible measure, fair or foul, to preserve their business on Indian waters. To save the industry from this situation the British Parliament had to spend millions of pounds from the national exchequer.

In spite of the persistent agitation by the Indian section of the industry and in spite of the recommendations by the various committees and commissions, for early development of this industry, the Government have not only remained inactive but positively siding with the vested interests in their endeavour to bring about the ruin of India's shipping industry. It reached its climax at the incorporation of section 115 of the new Government of India Act (1935), by which India's right to reserve her coastal traffic is denied for ever, and in the name of safeguards, India would be prevented from developing her own merchant shipping. The only hope that yet remains for the Indian shipping is through gathering strength to stand in competition against the powerful foreign companies. Nothing in this regard is possible until " fair competition comes into play by the Government making the payment of deferred rebates illegal and the waging of rate-wars impossible." It is the minimum, a national industry can claim.

Estimating on a very conservative basis India's annual freight bill comes to nearly Rs. 57 crores. Against this India's share of national shipping in her foreign sea borne trade is barely 2 per cent., which provides us with an idea of the huge drain of national wealth, and the vast scope for the development of a well equipped Indian mercantile marine. The Government of India annually spends in England more than half a crore of rupees for the transport of British troops and officers, to and from India. Besides huge amounts are also paid annually on account of packet, freight and Lee concession passages. The bulk of this amount is received by the P. & O. Company. There is no reason why so huge an amount spent from the Indian exchequer should not be utilized for the benefit of Indian shipping. We have not before us a copy of Sir Halim Ghuznavi's Bill, but we presume that in all essentials it aims at the elimination of all the evils that stand in the way of India's progress to the development of a national mercantile shipping.

Reprinted from the Hindu (Madras), dated 21st May, 1936.

COASTAL TRAFFIC BILL.

The Control of the Coastal Traffic Bill introduced by Mr. P. N. Sapru in the Council of State has now been before the public for some time and we may take it that before the further stages of it are taken up in the legislature, both the commercial community and the country generally would have expressed their views on it. The Bill, it must be mentioned, is both in its objective and provisions different from the previous Bills dealing with the subject. It is considerably less ambitious and is far more restricted in scope. The object of it is not to reserve the coastal traffic to Indian bottoms as that of the earlier Bills was. It seeks to encourage the development of an Indian mercantile marine in India simply by controlling unfair competition in the coastal traffic of India. The Bill raises no question of discrimination between British and Indian shipping. Its object is the limited one of removing, to quote the Statement of Objects and Reason, " a possible impediment to the growth and development of Indian mercantile marine." In the existing conditions, the author of the Bill points out, " a well-established powerful company engaged in coastal traffic can easily put a new venture out of action by unfair competition, e.g., rate-cutting, grant of rebates, etc.," and " the fear of unfair competition deters Indian capital being invested in coastal shipping." Mr. Sapru's Bill seeks to prevent such competition.

The method whereby unfair competition is sought to be prevented is by vesting in the Governor-General-in-Council the necessary power effectively to penalise such competition. " When the Governor-General-in-Council is satisfied from a complaint, report or otherwise that unfair competition exists in the coastal traffic of British India by the lowering of the usual rates of fare or freight or by the grant of rebates or other concessions in any way whatever," runs the operative clause, " it shall, subject to the provisions of the Government of India Act, be lawful for him to

Reprinted from the Hindusthan Times (Delhi), 1st June, 1936.

CONTROL OF COASTAL TRAFFIC IN INDIA

The following is the text of the Bill to control the coastal traffic of India introduced in the Legislative Assembly during the last Delhi session :—

Whereas it is expedient to encourage the development of an Indian mercantile marine;

And whereas for this purpose it is expedient to control unfair competition in the coastal traffic of India;

It is hereby enacted as follows :—

1. (1) This Act may be called the Control of Coastal Traffic of India Act 193—.

(2) It extends to the whole of the coastal traffic of British India and of the continent of India.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the Governor-General-in-Council may, by notification in the *Gazette of India*, appoint.

2. When the Governor-General-in-Council is satisfied from a complaint, report or otherwise that unfair competition exists in the coastal traffic of British India or of the continent of India, by the lowering of the usual rates of fare or freight or by the grant of rebates or other concessions in any way whatsoever, it shall, subject to the provisions of the Government of India Act, be lawful for him to prescribe, from time to time, by rules published in the *Gazette of India*, the minimum rates of fare or freight between any ports in India or to prohibit by notification published in the said Gazette the grant of any rebate or concession which in his opinion amounts to unfair competition.

3. Any person who in the opinion of the Governor-General-in-Council contravenes any such rule or prohibition shall be punished with fine which may extend to Rs. 10,000, and shall also be liable to be debarred from taking any ship into any port in India

under the control of the Government of India or of any Provincial Government for such period or under such conditions as the Governor-General-in-Council may direct.

EXPLANATION.—A person shall include any company or association or body of individuals whether incorporated or not.

4. The Governor-General-in-Council may, by notification, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act. In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely :—

(a) for the procedure for complaint against or report about unfair competition :

(b) for enquiry into such complaint or report;

(c) for the imposition of the penalty of refusal of entry of any ship into any port and for the enforcement thereof.

OBJECTS AND REASONS

The statement of objects and reasons says :—

This Bill is intended to remove a possible impediment to the growth and development of the Indian mercantile marine. There is no question of any discrimination between British and Indian shipping. Past experience, however, shows that a well established powerful company engaged in coastal traffic can easily put a new venture out of action by unfair competition, e.g. rate-cutting, grant of rebates, etc. The fear of unfair competition deters Indian capital being invested in coastal shipping. If the Governor-General-in-Council be given power to prevent such competition, the fear will be largely allayed and a new line of commercial activity may be opened out to Indians. By this Bill, power is given to the Governor-General-in-Council when he is satisfied that unfair competition exists, to fix minimum rates of fare and freight or to prohibit the grant of rebates or other concessions which are calculated to reduce such minimum rates. Contravention of any rule prescribed by the Governor-General-in-Council or any direction

given by him with regard to the grant of concessions is made punishable with fine or refusal of entry to an Indian port.

The following are the signatories to the Bill :—Sir A. H. Ghuznavi, Mr. P. Banerjea, Mr. Lakshmi Kant Maitra, Mr. Baijnath Bajoria, Raja Sir Vasudeva Rajah, Haji Abdoola Haroon, Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, Mr. S. Murtuza, Mr. M. A. Azim, Mr. N. C. Chunder, Mr. Nilakantha Das, Mr. Fazl-i-Haq Piracha, Mr. N. B. Bhutto, Sir Muhammad Yakub, Mr. Sami Venkatachelam Chetty, Mr. N. B. Khare, Seth Govind Das, Mr. N. V. Gadgil, Mr. C. N. Muthuranga Mudaliar, Mr. M. Ghiasuddin, Mr. B. Das, Mr. K. Nageswara Rao, Mr. Anugrah Narayan Sinha, Mr. Mohd. Azhar Ali, Mr. Ghulam Bhik Nairang, Mr. Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyaya, Bhai Parma Nand, Mr. Satya Narain Sinha, Sirdar Mangal Singh, Mr. Siddique Ali Khan, Mr. Basanta Kumar Das, Pandit Krishna Kant Malaviya, Mr. S. K. Hosmani, Mr. Lalchand Navalrai, Mr. Samuel Aaron, Mr. Badi-uz-Zaman, Mr. N. C. Bardaloi, Mr. Sheodass Daga, Mr. Abdul Matin Chaudhury, Mr. Bhagchand Soni, Dr. T. S. S. Rajan and Mr. M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar.

Reprinted from the Hindusthan Times (Delhi), 13th June, 1936.

NEW INDIAN SHIPPING CONCERN

Rangoon, June 12.

A stir has been created here especially among the shippers, with the advent of a new Indian shipping concern named the Ocean Shipping Company, which will carry freight between Rangoon and the Indian ports.

It is reported that just before the running of this company, the shippers (merchants) requested the B.I.S.N. Company here to reduce the freight of rice from Rs. 6-8 to Rs. 6 in view of large shipments of the commodity to Calcutta to meet the increased demand of rice in Bengal and Assam owing to rice scarcity. It is understood this request was refused, but the sudden appearance of the Ocean Shipping Company's steamer, s.s. "Haishang," embarrassed the British monopolists. Finding that the new company is getting good support from merchants, the B.I.S.N. Company has reduced their rice freight from Rs. 6-8 to 3-4 and now to Rs. 2 which is said to be a ridiculously low rate, which the public think, is intended for driving out the Indian Company from the field.—United Press.

Reprinted from the Hindusthan Times (Delhi), 14th June, 1936.

PROBLEM OF INDIAN SHIPPING

A Bill was introduced in the Legislative Assembly by Sir A. H. Ghuznavi, and another identical in its terms in the Council of State by Mr. P. N. Sapru last April, to control the coastal traffic of India. The Bill had been signed by over forty members of the Assembly belonging to various parties, including consistent supporters of the Government, no less than uncompromising Congressmen. This in itself indicates the extent and strength of feeling that exists in the country in regard to the question of development of Indian shipping. The problem of shipping in India as elsewhere has been more than of mere commercial importance and has become an issue of national policy. The reason is plain. India did possess in the past shipping and ship-building industries which suffered almost complete annihilation owing to the growth and invasion of British shipping. Numerous efforts have been made during the last fifty years to develop Indian shipping but most of these attempts have failed mainly owing to the ruthless opposition of British vested interests. It has been calculated that during the last forty years, more than 25 shipping companies, whose subscribed capital aggregated to more than Rs. 20 crores, have been compelled to go into liquidation and most of them were found to close down owing to severe rate-wars. The emergence of a new Indian company in Rangoon has been the signal for another rate-war and the B. I. S. N. Co., are already reported to have reduced their rates on rice from Rs. 6-8 to Rs. 2.

Frustrated Efforts

Attempts which were made to legislate for the protection of Indian shipping and the preservation of the Indian coast for Indian bottoms have failed, despite the recommendations of a committee of businessmen and experts appointed by the Government themselves in 1923-24. It is often argued by Government spokesmen inside and outside the Legislature that Indian shipping has grown

since 1921 when the question of its development assumed considerable importance. The facts, however, reveal a different story. The total share of Indian shipping in the coastal trade of India does not amount to more than about 21 per cent. while the total Indian-owned tonnage is only about 23 per cent. of the total volume of shipping participating in the coastal trade of India. The share of Indian shipping in the carriage of passengers on the Indian coast is hardly 8 per cent. while Indian shipping does not at all participate in the overseas trade of the country, despite its large volume of foreign trade. If the growth of, say, 20 per cent. in 20 years, that is, one per cent. per annum, in the coastal trade satisfies the Government, their ambitions for India are certainly not high!

A Fair Demand

In spite of repeated demands from the public, the Government have not cared to implement their promises in regard to development of an Indian mercantile marine in the coastal and overseas trade of India. They have no constructive policy to suggest and are opposed to any proposal of coastal reservation as well as to any method of subsidy for the development of Indian shipping in the overseas trade, though almost all the important maritime countries in the world to-day, including the British Dominions are subsidizing their own shipping. The Government are even averse to giving any preferential treatment to Indian shipping in regard to carriage of Government stores, railway materials, passages of officials and similar concessions on the plea of "no discrimination" and only base their policy on the platitude of "goodwill and co-operation." In view of this attitude and the commercial safeguards in the new Constitution, it is not surprising that many of our legislators have lost heart and tend to fall back on the moderate slogan that "half a loaf is better than no loaf." The only advice we venture to offer them is that they should see that even the half a loaf that they are trying for is really constituted of good ingredients and that the remedy does not prove worse than the disease. We would point out in this connection that the Gov-

ernment have already accepted the principle of fixing minimum and maximum rates in respect of inland navigation, although we are not yet aware that this has, in any way, made for the progress and development of Indian inland navigation companies in Bengal or elsewhere. We do not see on what ground, therefore, the Government can legitimately object to the measure introduced by Mr. Sapru and Sir A. H. Ghuznavi and we trust that if and when it is referred to a Select Committee in Simla, it will be so refashioned and improved that it will make possible not only the prevention of unfair competition and ruinous rate-wars, but also the speedy and healthy development of Indian shipping.

Reprinted from the Indian Economist (Calcutta), 1st June, 1936.

INDIAN COASTAL SHIPPING

It is a sad commentary on the fiscal autonomy which India is supposed to enjoy that far from being able to reserve her coastal shipping to national "bottoms," she is even unable to save them from the uneconomic and unfair competition of foreign shipping in her coastal carrying trade. Not that Indian national shipping is not able to effectively carry the responsibility efficiently and competitively. We refer to the question of India's competitive efficiency not because we do not consider that India has every right to reserve her coastal carrying trade to her national shipping only, —but only to demonstrate how great is the burden of unfair treatment heaped on Indian coastal shipping, apart from the obvious economic consequences of such a state of affairs. Except in the Argentine, Chile and Brazil where foreign shipping is allowed to carry on coastal passenger-carrying to a certain extent, coastal carrying is reserved in all civilized countries to national shipping. It is not an indication of India's generosity that her national shipping which has developed to some extent in spite of the heaviest odds and the most unfair competition of well organised foreign, particularly British shipping with huge resources at their command, but only an additional proof of the manipulation of the political power held by British vested interests in this country to exploit the Indian coastal carrying trade to their own advantage and practically to the exclusion of India's national shipping from its benefits. The huge economic waste devolving on the country from such a state of affairs would be obvious if we were to take into consideration the possibilities and potentialities of the extensive Indian coastal sea-boards to this branch of shipping. We all know what treatment was accorded to Indian interests in this connection when Mr. S. N. Haji's Indian Coastal Shipping Bill failed to receive legislative sanction in the Central Legislature a little more than a decade ago. The situation has been made all the more difficult, as we have already mentioned, by the unfair competition of foreign

shipping which has again and again sought to stifle what little of India's own national shipping has developed during the last few decades in spite of such adverse circumstances; and far from cherishing any fond hope of ever being able to reserve the Indian coastal carrying trade to India's national shipping, the problem that faces us immediately in this regard is that of saving it from the onslaughts of unfair foreign competition. The usual and the most obvious shape that such competition assumes is that of undercutting rates and freights and Sir A. H. Ghuznavi and the Hon'ble Pandit P. N. Sapru introduced a Coastal Traffic Bill providing for powers to the Governor-General-in-Council to intervene in the matter of rates and freights with a view to preventing their going below a certain minimum and for dealing with the question of rebating, etc. in the Indian Legislative Assembly and the Council of State during the last April session. The Bill is due to come up for the Assembly's consideration at its next Simla session, and we can only hope that it will receive legislative sanction. We are not very sanguine, however, even if the Bill goes through, which we have reasons to doubt, that it will be of any substantial assistance to Indian coastal shipping.

Foreign Ships in British Coastwise Trade

It has been found that Indian shipping has very little space in her national coastwise traffic. As things are, it is more than India can hope that Indian shipping will be able to increase its share in this trade substantially in the near future. All that it is immediately concerned with is the maintenance of what little Indian national coastwise shipping has developed at its present level against unfair foreign competition. What a contrast is provided to this state of affairs in the clamour already raised in Great Britain regarding the encroachments of foreign ' bottoms ' in her coastwise trade. Yet the ' encroachments ' referred to are practically negligible so far. The trade and navigation results for the past quarter show that arrivals of foreign ships with cargoes during the quarter was 143,708 net tons against 71,429 for the same quarter of last

year and 82,280 net tons in the first quarter of 1934. Departure of foreign tonnages with cargoes aggregated 144,177 net tons compared with 71,963 and 75, 972 tons respectively. In the trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, foreign arrivals were 4,264 net tons against 856 net tons last year and 974 net tons in 1934, and departures 4,254 net tons against 284 and 974 net tons. These figures indicate some increase in the total foreign encroachments no doubt, but they are yet practically negligible compared to the aggregate British tonnage in this trade. Still alert British vested interests are alarmed about its potentialities. What a contrast with conditions obtaining in India!

Reprinted from the Leader (Allahabad), 27th May, 1936.

MR. SAPRU'S COASTAL TRAFFIC BILL

According to a statement made in the House of Commons in mail week by the President of the Board of Trade, the principal countries in which the coasting trade is reserved to national vessels are France, Greece, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Turkey, Japan, and the United States of America; while Argentina, Brazil and Chile, whilst reserving their coasting trade to national vessels, permit foreign vessels to carry passengers from one port to another. If India to-day had a national government, there can be no doubt that she too would have followed the example of Japan, U. S. A. and the other countries mentioned above. How necessary in the interests of India such a policy was may be realized from the fact that it was the opinion of no less a body than the Mercantile Marine Committee which included among its members an ex-director of the Royal Indian Marine and a British naval architect, that for the development of an Indian merchant marine the establishment of a training ship was not enough, that what was wanted was the reservation of the coastal trade to Indian shipping. But our masters have ordained otherwise—as they have a knack of doing. Under the anti-India Act, which is supposed to hasten the advent of Swaraj, the Indian legislature cannot make any discrimination between ships owned by Indian companies and foreign companies, even in respect of the grant of subsidies, bounties, or any other form of state aid, to say nothing of excluding foreign ships from the coastal trade altogether.

Ever since the reformed councils came into existence, the Assembly has been urging the Government to come to the help of Indian shipping which requires immediate protection. We are on the eve of more 'reforms'. And yet, so far nothing substantial has been done. That is how the self-appointed trustees of India treat Indian wishes and Indian interests. Will the Government even now revise their policy? Here is an excellent opportunity for them to do a good turn to Indian shipping. In April last the

Hon. Mr. P. N. Sapru introduced in the Council of State a Bill to control unfair competition in the coastal trade. So often in the past have the older shipping companies been able to crush new enterprises by means of rate-wars, the grant of deferred rebates, and other unfair methods of competition, that a measure of protection has become indispensable. Mr. Sapru's Bill gives the Governor-General-in-Council power to fix minimum rates and to prohibit the grant of rebates when he is satisfied that unfair competition exists in the coastal trade. In this Bill there is no question of what is called making discrimination between foreign and Indian shipping. Not that we are very much impressed by this hue and cry against discrimination. It is notorious that Britain destroyed Indian industries and built up her colossal trade on its ruins by a persistent policy of discrimination in India against Indian industries. And so many countries exclude foreign vessels from their coastal trade. Indeed we remember that Britain herself introduced Nagivation Laws which discriminated against foreign shipping, and which were withdrawn only when her supremacy at sea was fully established and when those laws instead of doing her any good, irritated other countries which replied by adopting retaliatory measures.

But supposing for the moment that Japan, U. S. A., and so many other countries who have excluded foreign ships from their coastal trade, are doing something which is undesirable, that the recommendations of the Mercantile Marine Committee were based on a wrong principle, what objection can the Government have to Mr. Sapru's Bill, which leaves the coastal trade open both to foreign and indigenous shipping, and penalizes only those who employ unfair methods of competition? The fear of unfair competition deters the investment of Indian capital in coastal shipping. If the Government is given power to prevent such competition, the fear will be allayed to a considerable extent and a new line of commercial activity may be opened to Indians. May we hope that Mr. Sapru's Bill, which is a very modest measure, will receive better treatment at the hands of the Government than Mr. Haji's Bill nine years ago? Our own opinion is

Reprinted from the Leader (Allahabad), 27th May, 1936.

MR. SAPRU'S COASTAL TRAFFIC BILL

According to a statement made in the House of Commons in mail week by the President of the Board of Trade, the principal countries in which the coasting trade is reserved to national vessels are France, Greece, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Turkey, Japan, and the United States of America; while Argentina, Brazil and Chile, whilst reserving their coasting trade to national vessels, permit foreign vessels to carry passengers from one port to another. If India to-day had a national government, there can be no doubt that she too would have followed the example of Japan, U. S. A. and the other countries mentioned above. How necessary in the interests of India such a policy was may be realized from the fact that it was the opinion of no less a body than the Mercantile Marine Committee which included among its members an ex-director of the Royal Indian Marine and a British naval architect, that for the development of an Indian merchant marine the establishment of a training ship was not enough, that what was wanted was the reservation of the coastal trade to Indian shipping. But our masters have ordained otherwise—as they have a knack of doing. Under the anti-India Act, which is supposed to hasten the advent of Swaraj, the Indian legislature cannot make any discrimination between ships owned by Indian companies and foreign companies, even in respect of the grant of subsidies, bounties, or any other form of state aid, to say nothing of excluding foreign ships from the coastal trade altogether.

Ever since the reformed councils came into existence, the Assembly has been urging the Government to come to the help of Indian shipping which requires immediate protection. We are on the eve of more 'reforms'. And yet, so far nothing substantial has been done. That is how the self-appointed trustees of India treat Indian wishes and Indian interests. Will the Government even now revise their policy? Here is an excellent opportunity for them to do a good turn to Indian shipping. In April last the

Hon. Mr. P. N. Sapru introduced in the Council of State a Bill to control unfair competition in the coastal trade. So often in the past have the older shipping companies been able to crush new enterprises by means of rate-wars, the grant of deferred rebates, and other unfair methods of competition, that a measure of protection has become indispensable. Mr. Sapru's Bill gives the Governor-General-in-Council power to fix minimum rates and to prohibit the grant of rebates when he is satisfied that unfair competition exists in the coastal trade. In this Bill there is no question of what is called making discrimination between foreign and Indian shipping. Not that we are very much impressed by this hue and cry against discrimination. It is notorious that Britain destroyed Indian industries and built up her colossal trade on its ruins by a persistent policy of discrimination in India against Indian industries. And so many countries exclude foreign vessels from their coastal trade. Indeed we remember that Britain herself introduced Nagivation Laws which discriminated against foreign shipping, and which were withdrawn only when her supremacy at sea was fully established and when those laws instead of doing her any good, irritated other countries which replied by adopting retaliatory measures.

But supposing for the moment that Japan, U. S. A., and so many other countries who have excluded foreign ships from their coastal trade, are doing something which is undesirable, that the recommendations of the Mercantile Marine Committee were based on a wrong principle, what objection can the Government have to Mr. Sapru's Bill, which leaves the coastal trade open both to foreign and indigenous shipping, and penalizes only those who employ unfair methods of competition? The fear of unfair competition deters the investment of Indian capital in coastal shipping. If the Government is given power to prevent such competition, the fear will be allayed to a considerable extent and a new line of commercial activity may be opened to Indians. May we hope that Mr. Sapru's Bill, which is a very modest measure, will receive better treatment at the hands of the Government than Mr. Haji's Bill nine years ago? Our own opinion is

Reprinted from the Leader (Allahabad), 29th May, 1936.

We note that complaints are being made over the growth of foreign shipping in British coastwise trade. The *Economist* gives figures which show that the tonnage of foreign ships in coastal trade has considerably increased in recent times, though the total foreign figures are small compared with 'the very considerable annual tonnage in our coasting trade, for they amounted to only 148,000 net tons in comparison with 6,900,000 net tons'. It observes: 'A demand for measures to "protect" British coastwise shipping against the redoubtable foreigner would therefore appear to be a little premature at this stage.' But there is not the least doubt that if ever foreign shipping seriously menaces British shipping in the coastal trade of Britain the Government would take prompt action to protect and safeguard the interests of British shipping. The coastal trade of India has been monopolised by foreign shipping but the Government of India has done nothing to prevent unfair competition and to protect and promote the interest of Indian shipping in spite of complaints, representations and agitation. The reason for the immobility of the Government appears to be that it is helpless in taking action in matters which affect British interests and has to obey the behests of its masters abroad. (Is it mere helplessness?) This is perhaps also the reason why the recommendation of the Mercantile Marine Committee for the reservation of the coastal trade of India to Indian shipping has not been given effect to. Ample precaution has been taken in the new constitution for ruling out proposals for such reservation in future.

Reprinted from the Modern Review (Calcutta), June, 1936.

MR. P. N. SAPRU'S AND SIR A. H. GHUZNAVI'S COASTAL TRAFFIC BILL.

France, Greece, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Turkey, Japan and the United States of America are the principal countries which at present reserve their coastal traffic to national vessels. Argentina, Brazil and Chile reserve such trade to their national vessels but permit foreign vessels to carry passengers from one port to another. Great Britain herself in times past built up her large mercantile marine by her Navigation Laws, which discriminated against foreign shipping. These laws were in force so long as it was necessary, and were withdrawn only when, British supremacy at sea being fully established, they became superfluous and served only to irritate other countries, which adopted a retaliatory policy. It is also well known, as readers of Major B. D. Basu's *Ruin of Indian Trade and Industries* are aware, that the chief British industries were built up on the ruins of Indian industries destroyed by the arm of political injustice.

Mr. Kshitish Chandra Neogy wanted to have a law passed for reserving coastal traffic in Indian waters to national vessels. This duty was later transferred to Mr. Haji as one better equipped to pilot it through the legislature. The Indian public need not be reminded of the fate of Mr. Haji's Bill.

A similar bill cannot now be introduced in the Assembly or the Council of State with expectation of a better fate. What Britain herself once did, and may again do to protect herself against Italian, American or Japanese competition and what is still done by the countries named in the first few lines of this note, has been dubbed "discrimination" by the British Parliament in last year's Government of India Act. The Indian legislature has been made powerless to commit the heinous crime of such " discrimination " between ships owned by Indians or Indian companies and those owned by foreigners or foreign companies. Our " Swaraj "

Parliament can not only not exclude foreign ships from our coastal traffic, it cannot even grant any subsidies, bounties or any other form of state aid to Indian vessels for which British ships doing business here will not be equally eligible.

Under the circumstances, the utmost that can be done to help national vessels has been attempted to be done by the Hon'ble Mr. P. N. Sapru by the introduction in the Council of State of a bill to control unfair competition in the coastal trade. It has been sponsored in the Assembly by Sir A. H. Ghuznavi. It is a very modest measure giving the Governor-General-in-Council to fix minimum rates and to prohibit the grant of rebates when he is satisfied that unfair competition exists in the coastal trade. We wish the sponsors all success.

Reprinted from "Mohammadi" (Calcutta), 2nd July, 1936.

ভারত উপকূলে ভারতীয় জাহাজ

পৃথিবীর সমস্ত সভ্য দেশেই উপকূল বাণিজ্যের মালপত্র আমদানী রফ্‌তানী করিবার অধিকার নিজ নিজ দেশের জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলির জন্য সংরক্ষিত। একমাত্র ভারতবর্ষেই ইহার ব্যতিক্রম দেখা যায়। আব্রহ্ম ভারতের সুবিস্তীর্ণ সমুদ্র উপকূলের জাহাজ ব্যবসায়ের অধিকার অ-ভারতীয়দিগের মুষ্টিগত, বৈদেশিকরাই ইহাতে সর্ব্বেসর্ব্বা। তাঁহারা এ-ব্যবসায়ের উপরে এমনভাবে আধিপত্য বিস্তার করিয়া বসিয়াছেন যে, তাঁহাদের সহিত প্রতিযোগিতায় দেশীয় কোম্পানীর টিকিয়া থাকিবার উপায় নাই।

মোগল রাজত্বের অবসানের কিঞ্চিৎ পূর্ব্বেও ভারতীয় উপকূলের মালপত্র আমদানী রফ্‌তানী ভারতীয় জাহাজের মারফতেই হইত। কিন্তু কালে বৃটিশ জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলির প্রতিযোগিতায় এই ব্যবসায়টি সম্পূর্ণভাবে আমাদের হস্তচ্যুত হইয়া গিয়াছে। আমাদের দেশীয় নাবিকগণ নামমাত্র বেতনে বৈদেশিক জাহাজে খালাসীর কাজ করিয়া নিতান্ত দীনভাবে দিন গুজরান করিতেছে। চট্টগ্রাম, নোয়াখালি, শ্রীহট্ট প্রভৃতি জেলার খালাসীদিগের দৈন্য ও দুর্দ্দশা দেখিলে অন্তর ব্যথিত হয়। আমাদের দেশীয় ব্যবসায়ীরা অনেকবার জাহাজ কোম্পানী গঠন করিয়া বৈদেশিক কোম্পানীর প্রতিযোগিতায় বহু টাকা লোকসান দিয়া জাহাজগুলি জলের দরে বিক্রয় করিতে বাধ্য হইয়াছেন। বাঙ্গলার অধিবাসীরা ভালরকমই জানেন যে, চট্টগ্রাম হইতে আকিয়াব, রেঙ্গুন প্রভৃতি বন্দরে গমনেচ্ছু যাত্রীগণ যাহাতে দেশীয় কোম্পানীর জাহাজে না যাইতে পারে তজ্জন্য বৈদেশিক কোম্পানীগুলি অনেক সময় বিনামূল্যে তাহাদিগকে টিকেট বিতরণ করিয়াছেন। অনেক সময় তাহাদিগকে রুমাল, মেঠাই প্রভৃতি উপহার দিয়াছেন। গত ১৫০ বৎসর যাবৎ বৈদেশিক কোম্পানীগুলি ভারতের উপকূল বাণিজ্যের একচেটিয়া অধিকার ভোগ করিয়া এত টাকা লাভ করিয়াছেন যে, নূতন কোনও দেশীয় কোম্পানীকে ধ্বংস করার জন্য তাঁহারা যদি কয়েক বৎসর বিনা ভাড়ায় যাত্রী ও মাল বহন করে তাহা হইলেও তাহাদের বিশেষ কিছু ক্ষতি হয় না। একথা উল্লেখ করা নিষ্প্রয়োজন যে, উপকূলের জাহাজ-

ব্যবসায় প্রায় সম্পূর্ণভাবে বৃটিশ কোম্পানীগুলির অধিকারভূক্ত। সুতরাং কোম্পানীগুলি ডাক-বহন এবং অন্যান্য সরকারী কার্য্যের কনট্রাক্ট অতি সহজেই পাইয়া থাকেন।

জাহাজের ব্যবসায়ে বাঙ্গলার মুছলমানের স্বার্থ অত্যন্ত ঘনিষ্ঠভাবে জড়িত। জাহাজী শ্রমিকের কাজে বাঙ্গালী মুছলমানই সর্ব্বাপেক্ষা পরিশ্রমী ও নির্ভরশীল, একথা প্রত্যেকেই স্বীকার করেন। দ্বিতীয়তঃ উপকূল বাণিজ্যের বেশীর ভাগই মুছলমান বণিকগণের করতলগত। হ্যামণ্ড কমিটির নিকট মোছলেম চেম্বার অব কমার্স এক বিবৃতিতে বলিয়াছেন :—

"Members of this Chamber control about 75 per cent. of the coastal trade of Bengal and India, in which connection commitments for freight to the extent of over 1,500,000 tons are made by them annually with the shipping companies, principally British, operating in Bengal."

অর্থাৎ বাঙ্গলা ও ভারতের উপকূল বাণিজ্যের শতকরা ৭৫ ভাগ মোছলেম চেম্বারের সদস্যগণের হাতে এবং তাহারা এই ব্যবসায়ের মাল আমদানী রফতানীর জন্য জাহাজ কোম্পানীগুলিকে বার্ষিক ১৫ লক্ষ টনের (প্রতি টন প্রায় ২৮ মণ) ভাড়া দিয়া থাকেন। জাহাজের মালিকগণ প্রধানতঃ বৃটিশ।

অত্যন্ত দুঃখের বিষয়, সমস্ত সুবিধা থাকা সত্বেও অনেক মুছলমান ধনী জাহাজ ব্যবসায়ে লিপ্ত হইয়া বৈদেশিক কোম্পানীর প্রতিযোগিতার ফলে যথাসর্ব্বস্ব নষ্ট করিয়াছেন। এই সমস্ত অবস্থা দেখিয়া ১৯২৭ সালে ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থা পরিষদে মিঃ হাজী একটি বিল উত্থাপন করেন। ইহাতে প্রস্তাব করা হয়, বাণিজ্য ভারতীয় জাহাজ মালিকদিগের জন্য সংরক্ষিত হওয়া উচিত। গবর্ণমেণ্ট এবং ইউরোপীয় মেম্বরগণের তীব্র বিরোধিতার ফলে মিঃ হাজীর বিল পরিত্যক্ত হয়। উপরন্তু নূতন শাসনতন্ত্রে এমন বিধান করা হইয়াছে, যাহাতে ভারতীয়গণ কখনও এইরূপ আইন প্রণয়ন করিতে না পারে। সে যাহা হউক, সম্প্রতি ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থা পরিষদে স্যার আবদুল হালিম গজনভী একটি নূতন বিল পেশ করিয়াছেন। ইহার মর্ম্ম এই যে, উপকূল বাণিজ্যে লিপ্ত কোনও

জাহাজ কোম্পানী যদি গবর্ণমেণ্টের নিকট এই মর্ম্মে নালিশ করে যে অন্য জাহাজ কোম্পানী তাহাদের সহিত অন্যায়ভাবে প্রতিযোগিতা করিতেছে তাহা হইলে সপারিষদ গবর্ণর জেনারেল বাহাদুর উহার সত্যাসত্য অনুসরণ করিয়া আবশ্যক হইলে মাল ও যাত্রীর ভাড়ার সর্ব্বনিম্ন হার বাঁধিয়া দিতে পারিবেন। স্যার গজনভীর বিলের উদ্দেশ্য, ভাড়ার সর্ব্বনিম্ন হার নির্দ্ধারিত থাকিলে, বৈদেশিক কোম্পানীগুলি যথেচ্ছভাবে ভাড়া কমাইয়া দেশীয় কোম্পানীগুলির সহিত অন্যায় প্রতিযোগিতা করিতে পারিবে না। প্রকৃতপক্ষে ভারতীয় ধনীগণ যদি একটু মাত্র ভরসা পায় যে, জাহাজের ব্যবসায়ে লিপ্ত হইলে গবর্ণমেণ্ট তাঁহাদিগকে অন্যায় প্রতিযোগিতা হইতে রক্ষা করিবেন, তাহা হইলে তাঁহারা বহু কোটি টাকা মূলধন জোগাড় করিয়া উপকূল বাণিজ্যে ভারতীয় জাহাজের ন্যায়সঙ্গত অধিকার স্থাপন করিতে পারেন। ভারতীয়গণ যে শিল্প বাণিজ্যে অন্য কোনও দেশীয় লোকের চেয়ে পশ্চাৎপদ নহে তাহার ভূরি ভূরি প্রমাণ আছে। এই ক্ষেত্রেও যদি তাহাদের ন্যায়সঙ্গত অধিকার প্রদান করা হয় তাহা হইলে তাহারা যে কৃতকার্য্য হইবে সে বিষয়ে কোনও সন্দেহ নাই।

আমরা স্যার গজনভীর বিল সম্পূর্ণভাবে সমর্থন করি। যদিও এই বিলের দ্বারা আমাদের দাবী সম্পূর্ণভাবে মিটিবে না, তথাপি এই বিল পাস হইলে দেশীয় জাহাজ-ব্যবসায় সর্ব্বনাশের হাত হইতে অনেকটা রক্ষা পাইবে, সন্দেহ নাই। ভারতীয় ব্যবস্থা পরিষদের আগামী সিমলা অধিবেশনে এই বিলের আলোচনা হইবে। ইংরেজ বণিকগণ ইহার বিরুদ্ধে ইতিমধ্যেই জেহাদ ঘোষণা করিয়াছেন; কিন্তু ভারত সরকার ইহা সমর্থন করিবেন কিনা, তাহা জানা যায় নাই। আমাদের মতে ভারত সরকারের এই বিল সমর্থন করা একান্ত কর্ত্তব্য। ইহাতে অন্যায় আব্দার কিছুই নাই; উপরন্তু ইহাতে পরিষ্কারভাবে বলা হইয়াছে যে, বড়লাট বাহাদুর যদি মনে করেন যে, অন্যায়ভাবে প্রতিযোগিতা চলিতেছে কেবলমাত্র সেই ক্ষেত্রে তিনি ভাড়ার নিম্নতম হার নির্দ্ধারিত করিয়া দিবেন। গত ১৯৩০ সালে মিঃ কে, সি, নিয়োগী নদীপথগামী ষ্টীমার কোম্পানীগুলির জন্য এইরূপ একটি বিল উপস্থিত করিয়াছিলেন এবং তাহা গবর্ণমেণ্টের সমর্থনে পাস হইয়াছিল। ইহার ফলে এখন পর্য্যন্ত বিদেশী কোম্পানী একটিও উঠিয়া যায়

নাই। অথচ ইহা সত্ত্বেও গবর্ণমেণ্ট ও ইউরোপীয় সদস্যগণ স্যার গজনভীর বিল দেখিয়া এতটা আতঙ্কগ্রস্ত হইয়া পড়িয়াছেন কেন, আমরা তাহার কোনও সঙ্গত কারণ খুঁজিয়া পাইতেছি না। সুখের বিষয়, আমরা জানিতে পারিলাম, ইতিমধ্যেই ব্যবস্থা পরিষদের ৪২ জন নির্ব্বাচিত সভ্য এই বিল সমর্থন করিবেন বলিয়া সম্মতি দান করিয়াছেন। আমরা আশা করি, অন্যান্য সদস্যগণও ইহা সমর্থন করিয়া দেশবাসীর কৃতজ্ঞতাভাজন হইবেন।

Translated from "Mohammadi" (Calcutta), 2nd July, 1936.

INDIAN SHIPPING INTEREST IN THE INDIAN COAST

In all the civilized countries of the world, the right of carrying exports and imports of goods is reserved for their own national shipping concern. Only in India, we find it otherwise. The right of trade in the vast coast line running from Burma to India is monopolished by non-Indians, who have become predominant in this business. They hold so much influence in this industry that it is quite impossible for Indians to face their competition.

Just before the downfall of the Moghul rule, the exports and imports were being carried by Indian ships. But in course of time, as a result of competition of the British shipping firms, this trade has been transferred from Indians to Britishers. Indian seamen are employed in the foreign ships at nominal wages and are living from hand to mouth. The miserable conditions and sufferings of the crew hailing from Chittagong, Noakhali and Sylhet, cannot but create pity and compassion in one's mind. Indian merchants on several occasions formed shipping firms but on account of unfair competition of the British firms, they were forced to dispose of their ships at a cheap price and incurred a heavy loss thereon. The inhabitants of Bengal know full well that the foreign shipping firms have in order to prevent the passengers from going from Chittagong to Akyab and Rangoon in ships managed by indigenous (Indian) companies, offered them free tickets. Even on many occasions, they (passengers) were served with sweetmeats, handkerchiefs, etc., free of charge. Since the last 150 years, British steamship companies have been enjoying a monopoly on the Indian coast and thereby have made such huge profits, that they can, with a view to ruin the national shipping firms, easily carry passengers and cargo free of charge. It is needless to mention that the coastal trade in India is almost captured by the British shipping firms. Hence, they easily secure the contracts for carrying mails and other Government stores.

The interests of the Bengalee Muslims are inseparably connected with this shipping trade. It is well recognised that Bengalee

Mohammedans are most diligent and reliable in the ports as *lascars*. Secondly, the major portion of the coastal trade depends upon the Muslim merchants. The Muslim Chamber of Commerce, in their evidence before the Hammond Committee, stated "Members of this Chamber control about 75 per cent. of the coastal trade of Bengal and India, in which connection commitments for freight to the extent of over 1,500,000 tons are made by them annually with the shipping companies, principally British, operating in Bengal."

It is most painful that in spite of all these advantages in their favour, many of the rich Muslim merchants lost their all in shipping business on account of the improper competition by the foreign shipping firms. On account of this injustice, Mr. Haji introduced a Bill in the Legislative Assembly in 1927, wherein it was proposed that the sole control of the Indian coastal trade should be reserved for Indians. But Mr. Haji's Bill did not succeed as a result of the strenuous opposition of the Europeans and the Government. On the contrary, it has been settled in the new Reformed Scheme that India can never have that sort of Bill passed. Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi has introduced a new Bill in the Legislative Assembly, the purport of which is that His Excellency the Governor-General-in-Council should exercise his power to fix the lowest rate of freight if any shipping firm engaged in coastal trade, complains before the Government against the sister companies' resorting to unfair competition. It maintains that the lowest rate of freight being fixed, the national steamship companies will be protected from unfair and unjustifiable competition of the foreign shipping interests. In fact, if the rich men of India can get a slight hint that their shipping interests will be saved by the Government, they can accumulate huge capital of many crores in this business to establish the legitimate position of Indian ships in the coastal trade. It has been proved on many occasions that both in trade and in industrial affairs, Indians are not inferior to any of the foreigners. There is no doubt about their success in these affairs if legitimate protection is given.

We wholeheartdely support the Bill introduced by Sir Ghuznavi. Though our demand will not be satisfied entirely, it is

certain that if this Bill is passed, Indian shipping activities would have some protection from their present ruinous condition. This Bill will be discussed in the coming session of the Indian Legislative Assembly which will be held in Simla. British merchants are already determined to oppose it. It is not known as yet whether the India Government will support it or not. In our opinion, the India Government should support this Bill. There is nothing unreasonable in it. Moreover, it has been clearly stated therein that the Viceroy will fix the lowest rate of freight in case of unreasonable competition. In 1930, Mr. K. C. Neogy submitted a Bill regarding Inland River Navigation service and being supported by the Government, it has passed into law. In consequence of this Bill, no foreign company has as yet been abolished. Hence, we are at a loss to understand why the Government as well as the European members have become so much panic-stricken by Sir Ghuznavi's Bill. We are very glad to learn that by this time some 42 elected members have agreed to support this Bill. We hope that other members too will support this Bill and will thereby earn the gratitude of their countrymen.

Reprinted from the Statesman (Calcutta), 4th July, 1936.

MERCANTILE SHIPPING

INAUGURATION OF INDIAN CONCERN

" India must realise that intellectualism has failed to give us the alchemy that will turn our raw products into gold and that in trade and commerce lies the salvation of our vast population," said the Hon. Maharaja Sir Manmatha Nath Roy Chowdhury of Santosh in inaugurating the United Steam Navigation Company Ltd., at 26, Strand Road, Calcutta, last evening.

Continuing the Maharaja said that undoubtedly India had gained some footing in the development of trade and industries in the East but the most important source of national wealth and prosperity, namely, the mercantile shipping, had not yet been explored. He appealed to all present and to the whole of the Indian nation to come forward with their whole-hearted support for the success of this venture.

Mr. A. K. Fazlul Huq, a Director, read a letter from the Maharaja of Burdwan who, expressing regret at his inability to attend, wished the enterprise every success. " In the field of shipping industry there is much scope for Indian capitalists," he added.

The Company at present propose to charter three ships for conducting regular weekly services between Calcutta and Rangoon and other coastal ports.

INDIAN MERCHANTS' ASSOCIATION, CHITTAGONG

FROM

BABU KUMUD BEHARY CHOWDHURY, B.A.,

Asst. Secretary.

TO

THE SECRETARY, COMMERCE DEPARTMENT,

Government of India, Simla.

CHITTAGONG, THE 20TH JULY, 1936.

RE: A BILL TO CONTROL THE COASTAL TRAFFIC OF INDIA.

SIR,

I am directed by my Committee to address you as under.

My Committee have seen a copy of "A Bill to Control the Coastal Traffic of India" introduced by Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, Kt., in the Legislative Assembly and by the Hon'ble Mr. P. N. Sapru in the Council of State on the 17th April last.

My Committee understand that the Bill is likely to be taken up for consideration during the next session of the Legislative Assembly at Simla, in September, 1936, and take this opportunity of offering their considered opinion on the Principle and Provisions of the Bill, as it now stands.

My Committee is in fullest possible agreement with the principle underlying the Bill and whole-heartedly support its objects which are:—

(1) to encourage the development of an Indian mercantile marine,

(2) and to establish a "control over unfair competition in the coastal traffic of India" to further object (1).

My Committee consider it needless to point out that several Indian shipping companies have been crushed out of existence by ruthless rate-war and uneconomic competition offered by the existing powerful British vested interests, in the past. The port of Chittagong itself has been the scene of such ruthless wars in the past and the fate of several ventures like the Bengal Coasting Company have been like that of such other ventures in other Indian maritime provinces. Cases have not been rare when the British lines have not only carried passengers free but have offered other inducements also to divert traffic from the Indian Companies' vessels. Such competition has been known in inland waters as well as in the coastal trade of India.

The report of the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee was published in 1924, but my Committee regret to observe, it was shelved by the Government.

His Excellency the Viceroy (Lord Irwin, then) in a shipping conference called by him in January, 1930, had been pleased to give an assurance, that the Government will consider introduction of suitable measures to prevent this sad state of affairs. It was then declared by the Government that it was the policy of the Government to see that not only should Indian shipping expand in the coastal trade of India, but that conditions necessary for the economic employment of coastal shipping were provided for. Nothing has, however, been done so far, to implement this policy, beyond its declaration.

My Committee desire to emphasise the fact, that one of the most potent causes of unfair competition, which the Bill under observation purports to control, is the existence of a much larger amount of tonnage in the coastal trade of India than its economic employment would warrant. The Committee therefore trusts, that as made clear by the Government in 1930 the Government will support the Bill, and hope that the Bill will be so amended as to render it possible to introduce a system of licensing the tonnage actually required on the coast, whereby the economic employment both in the interest of shippers and shipowners will be guaranteed.

In the above connection my Committee have to refer to clause two in the Bill, reading as under :—

> "2. When the Governor-General-in-Council is satisfied that unfair competition exists in the coastal traffic of British India or the continent of India, by lowering of the usual rates of fare or freight or by the grant of rebates or other concessions in any way whatsoever, it shall, subject to the provisions of the Government of India Act, be lawful for him to prescribe, from time to time, by rules published in the *Gazette of India*, the minimum rates of fare or freight between any parts of India or to prohibit by notification published in the said Gazette the grant of any rebate or concession which in his opinion amounts to unfair competition."

My Committee desire to suggest that this clause should be replaced by a suitably worded clause incorporating a system of licensing the tonnage required for the coastal traffic requirements, as recommended by the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee and as was also discussed, my Committee understand, at the Shipping Conference (1930) referred to above.

My Committee have no doubt that such a measure will afford a much necessary protection to begin with, to an industry like Indian shipping, which is a key industry and is vital to the economic development and national defence of a country.

My Committee would further point out that prevention of unfair competition as a principle deserving practical application has been accepted in the Act XIII of 1930, (an Act to amend the Inland Steam Vessels Act, 1917) which was passed by the Indian Legislature and received the assent of the Governor-General-in-Council on 24th March, 1930.

The Act XIII of 1930, however, in my Committee's opinion, has not tended to expand Indian shipping enterprise in inland waters, because its provisions were more or less of a negative nature, that is, these were designed to remove one of the many

impediments in the way of incipient Indian enterprise in that direction.

As clause 2 of the Bill under observation, is more or less on the same lines as clause 2 of the Act XIII of 1930 my Committee feel that much more than this is necessary to ensure the healthy and rapid development of Indian shipping in the coastal trade, and to secure for it, legitimate predominance in that trade. It cannot be gainsaid that the Indian coastal trade ought to be legitimately regarded as and respected as the domestic preserve of Indian shipping. This view is supported and sanctioned by International law, Shipping Practice and Imperial Maritime Legislation.

My Committee would further suggest that "and Burma and Ceylon" should be added in Sub-Clause 2 of Clause I after the words "Continent of India," as the shipping employed on the coast of India have always catered for the trade of India with Ceylon, and Burma despite the latter's but recent political separation from India.

Referring to clause 3 of the Bill under observation, my Committee are of opinion that liability "to be debarred from taking any ship into any port of India, etc." in the case of a vessel contravening the provisions of the Bill, is likely to entail hardships on passengers, officers and crew of a contravening vessel and to seriously affect the interest of shippers and consignees of its cargo. My Committee would therefore suggest that under a licensing system as already mentioned above, the penalty should be the deprival or suspension of the license as necessary.

I am further directed by my Committee to suggest that in order to give executive effect to the objects of the Bill as amended according to above suggestions, the Government should constitute a shipping Board, to receive and hear complaints of unfair competition, and determine normal rate of fare and freight. Such a Board should have Indian shipping fully represented on it.

In conclusion my Committee would repeat that with

modifications on the lines suggested above, the Bill has the support of their Association and trust that the same will be passed duly amended to further its most laudable object, namely the growth of Indian shipping in the coastal trade of India.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
For THE INDIAN MERCHANTS' ASSOCIATION,
CHITTAGONG.
(Sd.) K. B. CHOWDHURY,
Assistant Secretary.

Copy forwarded to Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, Kt., Member, Indian Legislative Assembly for information.

For THE INDIAN MERCHANTS' ASSOCIATION,
CHITTAGONG.
(Sd.) K. B. CHOWDHURY,
Assistant Secretary.

Copy.

MAHARASHTRA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

No. 1253/36. 29th July, 1936.

From

D. V. Kelkar, Esqr., M.A.,
Secretary.

To

The Secretary,

To the Government of India,

Department of Commerce, Simla.

SIR,

Subject. A Bill to Control the Coastal Traffic of India.

I have the honour to address you as under in respect of the above Bill, which is introduced in the Legislative Assembly by Sir A. H. Ghuznavi and in the Council of State by the Hon'ble Mr. P. N. Sapru and a copy of which the Committee of this Chamber have received from Sir A. H. Ghuznavi, M.L.A.

The Committee have to state that the coasting trade of India is open to all comers under the Indian Coasting Trade Act V of 1890. The witnesses who appeared before the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee were unanimous in their demand that this Act should be repealed with a view to the exclusion of foreigner from India's coasting trade. The Indian Mercantile Marine Committee recommended introduction of a licensing system in this behalf. But when the Government of India refused to take any action on the recommendations of the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee regarding reservation of coastal trade to Indian bottoms, a non-official Bill was introduced in the Legislative Assembly and having passed through the first reading it was referred to the Select Committee.

Subsequently, a Shipping Conference was convened by Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy, in January, 1930, in order to arrive at an

amicable settlement between the various shipping interests concerned. But when it was seen that nothing could be achieved this way, Government of India issued a communique on 6th January, 1930, and in this they stated that " the responsibility will rest with the Government of India of deciding what action should now be taken in respect of the development of Indian mercantile marine. Apart from making available the good Offices of their Department of Commerce for arriving at certain private agreement between British and Indian shipping companies, Government of India have, as far as the Committee of this Chamber are aware, done nothing to implement their oft-repeated undertaking of assisting the growth and expansion of Indian shipping, coastal and overseas. The Committee have before now on more occasions than one, drawn the attention of the Government of India to this question of vital importance to the nation's economic development. It has also been pointed out how the commercial safeguards embodied in the Government of India Act 1935 (Chapter III, Part V), make it impossible to develop national shipping. The Committee presume that a realisation of the obdurate attitude of the Government of India on this question as well as the utter helplessness of the position of Indian shipping under the new Constitution has prompted recourse to other efforts for removing the impediments in the way of the development of Indian mercantile marine. While the Committee are always prepared to favourably consider any measure or measures which aim at the development of an Indian mercantile marine, they cannot concede that the principle of the Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill is anything but fundamentally sound. This Chamber along with other Indian commercial bodies has always supported the Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill and the Committee consider it necessary to repeat here that they still hold the same view and that the Indian commercial community cannot reconcile itself to the restrictions imposed in the new Constitution on the powers of the Indian legislature to safeguard and promote Indian industries.

The Committee have to emphasise that Indian shipping like any other national industry must exist in its own inherent right

and not on sufferance of its non-Indian rivals. The Committee cannot accept the plea that the Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill was discriminatory in character and it is well-known that even the Law Officers of the Crown, who were twice consulted, held that it was not *ultra-vires* of the Indian legislature. The Government of Bombay did not raise any objection to the principle of the measure while expressing their opinion. The Committee of this Chamber take the view that no permanent and satisfactory solution of the problem of Indian shipping can be arrived at unless the predominance of Indian shipping in the country's coastal waters is ensured by some form of reservation or licensing such as was suggested by the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee and discussed at the Shipping Conference of 1930, at which Lord Irwin urged "economic employment" of coastal shipping along with the expansion of Indian shipping.

Re: Sir A. H. Ghuznavi's Bill, the Committee like to point out that rate-wars have been a favourite means by which powerful British shipping interests have been able to successfully exterminate incipient Indian shipping enterprises whenever it tried to establish itself in Indian coastal waters. The Committee, therefore, welcome this measure to prevent unfair competition. The one thing they would like to specifically point in this behalf is that the action taken under the Bill should prevent not only unfair competition of non-Indian shipping in the coastal trade, but it should also create conditions for the economic employment of tonnage therein. The Government of India must, therefore, have the necessary power to define and license the tonnage employed in the coastal traffic. It need hardly be pointed out that such a course must naturally involve the imposition of a penalty in the form of loss of license of the recalcitrant party if the purpose is to be properly served. The Committee, therefore, like to suggest that this penalty should be substituted in place of the one stated in clause 3 of the Bill. The Committee would also suggest the inclusion of Burma and Ceylon in Sub-Clause (2) of Clause I of the Bill inasmuch as the trade of India with Burma and Ceylon has always been an integral part of India's coasting trade.

Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce.

The Committee think that some machinery must be devised to determine complaints re : unfair competition and normal freight rates and they have further to state that with any such machinery Indian shipping interests must be closely associated.

Although the Committee think that the Bill by itself cannot make either for the economic employment or speedy and healthy development of Indian shipping, they like to accord their support to the Bill as one calculated to do away with an impediment in the way of the growth of Indian shipping.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
(Sd.) D. V. KELKAR.

Copy.

MAHARASHTRA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

PHŒNIX BUILDING,
BALLARD ESTATE,

Bombay, 6th August, 1936.

D/O No. 1320/36.

DEAR SIR A. H. GHUZNAVI,

I had duly received your letter of Calcutta of the 27th June, 1936, giving cover to identical Bills introduced by yourself and the Hon'ble Mr. P. N. Sapru in the Legislative Assembly and Council of State respectively.

I have to emphasise here that the real difficulty to-day is that there is surplus or excess tonnage in the Indian coastal traffic and unless a way is found to reduce this, real benefit to Indian shipping will not be possible even if your Bill is passed. It will even cause loss and hardship to Indians investing in new shipping enterprises as there would not be economical employment for all. The development of coastal shipping owned and managed by Indians can be brought about only by licensing tonnage on the coast; whether this licensing is to be of companies, steamers or total tonnage is a matter of detail; but reduction of non-Indian tonnage is absolutely essential if Indian tonnage is to have its due share in the coastal trade.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) Illegible,
Secretary.

To

Sir A. H. Ghuznavi, KT.
19, Strand Road,
Calcutta.

Copy.

BURMAH INDIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

Telephone No. 975. *Telegrams*: BURINCHAMB.

74, MOGUL STREET,
Rangoon 1st August, 1936.

Ref. No. M. 165/36-37.

To

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, KT.,
Member, Indian Legislative Assembly,
19, Strand Road, Calcutta.

DEAR SIR,

I am directed to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated the 26th June, 1936, enclosing copies of the Bill to control Coastal Traffic of India and of Act No. XIII of 1930.

My Committee have very carefully considered your Bill and are in general agreement with its provisions. At the same time they desire to offer certain criticisms and suggestions on the provisions.

Clause 3 of the Bill provides that any person contravening any rule or prohibition shall also be liable to be debarred from taking any ship into any port in India. My Committee feel that such a provision will be unworkable in practice as a ship cannot be prevented from entering a port. They, therefore, suggest that in the event of contravention of any rule or prohibition, the defaulting persons shall be punished with a fine which may extend to Rs. 10,000/- and/or the license of the ship concerned will be cancelled. To permit of the cancellation of the license, the Government of India should introduce a system under which licenses required under the above suggestion would be issued to every ship engaged in the coastal traffic of India.

Yours faithfully,
(Sd.) Illegible,
Secretary.

Published by Dhirendra Nath Sen, 19, Strand Road, Calcutta, and printed by K. C. Banerjee at the Modern Art Press, 1/2, Durga Pituri Lane, Calcutta.