

trying to get the hon. gentlemen on the Treasury benches to give us faster steamers, and I deprecate the idea of suppressing the very small amount that is now in the estimates to encourage our navigation companies in their work. They have an uphill work for the reason that the insurance rates have been higher on the St. Lawrence than on the American route. Let us recognize frankly that we have not done for our waterways what we should have done. We have not improved, especially our great St. Lawrence route as we should have improved it. We have not lighted or deepened it as we should have done, and let us not commit the mistake of discouraging our navigation companies. When I was a minister I remember very well that some of the navigation companies would decline to put their best boats on the St. Lawrence route. It was our fault. I do not speak in a party spirit. We had not provided in past years the necessary accommodation for trade and navigation. The St. Lawrence was not as safe as it should have been made. The amount in the estimates is a moderate one. I am sure that the great majority of hon. members will be ready to vote a larger sum for faster steamers. But, we have a fine service this year. The 'Tunisian,' the 'Bavarian,' the 'Canada' of the Dominion line, and the 'Ionian' are very fine liners indeed. They are not as fast as I would like them to be, but in the meantime I hope that instead of discouraging—

Mr. CLARKE. We are not discouraging this service.

Hon. Mr. TARTE. I just speak my own mind and I do not make allusion to anybody—instead of contemplating the removal from the estimates of the very moderate sum of money that is there now we should try to get more money and a better service.

Mr. CLARKE. Would the right hon. minister tell us the average weight of the mail matter that is sent by these steamers?

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. Well, that is very considerable. Of course, the great bulk of newspapers, and mail matter of that description go by way of the Canadian route, while the letters are sent by way of New York.

Mr. CLARKE. Could the right hon. gentleman tell us the weight of the letters or of the mail matter generally?

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. I am afraid I could not do that very well. I will try and get the information if the hon. gentleman desires it.

Mr. CLARKE. There must be some information in the department as to the weight of this mail matter?

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. That particular information is in the Post Office Department rather than in the Department of Trade and Commerce.

Hon. Mr. TARTE.

Mr. CLARKE. The right hon. minister is asking a vote for this service and I think it is not unreasonable for us to ask that we should have this information. It must be available.

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. I have no doubt I could obtain from the Post Office Department a statement of the average weight.

Mr. CLARKE. If we had a statement showing the average weight of the mails carried on each of these trips, the average weight of mail matter sent by way of the Canadian route and by way of the New York route, we would be able to decide as to the appreciation which the Canadian people have of their own route.

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. I could give in a general way information as to the proportion. I am quite sure that at least six-sevenths of the letters that go from Canada go by way of New York. Most of the mercantile correspondence westward of Montreal goes by way of New York. The mail matter from the maritime provinces goes chiefly from Halifax to St. John, but the great weight of the mails, that is to say, the newspapers, &c., goes by way of our vessels. Very little of that goes by way of New York.

Mr. CLARKE. Has the right hon. gentleman any figures under his hand or in his department showing the weight of this mail matter?

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. We have never looked upon it as a matter of so much per pound. I have no doubt as a matter of freight, if that is what the hon. gentleman wants to get at, that the price paid for the transmission of the number of tons of freight we send would be a very large one. But, that is not the reason for which this subsidy was originally given or has been continued. It was for the purpose of encouraging navigation from Canadian ports, and I may remind the hon. gentleman—perhaps he is not aware—that originally the subsidy given to the Allan Line was at least three times as great as it is at present. I think the subsidy, when it was first started, and that was from old Canada alone, was \$408,000 a year. It was afterwards reduced to \$200,000 and then it has been subsequently reduced to what it is now—between \$150,000 and \$170,000. The real fact of the matter is that this subsidy is given substantially for the purpose of maintaining inter-communication. We could easily send our mails during the summer season from Montreal and Quebec, but in order to maintain communication from the Canadian winter ports, to which both sides of the House have attached a great deal of importance, we are obliged to subsidize vessels going from St. John and Halifax very heavily, or we would have no line from these points in any degree equal