

the Allen Line, and as we get nothing out of it in the way of a mail service, we should get something out of it in the way of a freight service. I have heard the Minister of Agriculture complain in this House that he or the members of his staff did not feel that they were in a position to compel these steamship companies to provide the proper ventilation necessary for carrying perishable products. But here is an opportunity to secure that when these contracts are made. When something is paid for which no other service is rendered, the least the minister can do is to provide in that contract that these vessels should have their compartments properly ventilated in which perishable products are carried. In one of the contracts that is provided, so there can be no excuse why it should not be called for in the other contracts.

Mr. MONK. The reproach made by the hon. member for Elgin (Mr. Robinson) to the city of Montreal, rankles in my bosom. I can say in the language of Shakespeare:

I am not prone to weeping as some folks commonly are, but I have that honourable grief lodged here which burns worse than tears drown.

I do not think the hon. gentleman is justifiable in his aspersions upon the city of Montreal. Montreal is not such a dirty city as he would have us suppose. The houses are clean, the port is not in an unclean state, and I am sure the people are clean. I am quite sure that the agricultural products which come from the province of the hon. gentleman pass through less clean places than the city of Montreal. We have had a very unfortunate period in our municipal administration. We lost a great deal of money in a way in which the money should not have been lost. Some members of this House who know something of our municipal history, know that that state of affairs which has existed in the past has now come to an end. We have a better administration, an improved administration, and a large sum of money is going to be spent next year in keeping the streets clean; that is the principal point. So the hon. gentleman need not discourage people from sending freight through that very important port. I would like to add this at the same time, since my hon. friend from Northumberland (Mr. Cochrane) has raised the question. It is very important, when we give such large subsidies to steamship companies, that we should know what is the rate of freight for agricultural products, and how that rate compares with the rates of American shippers. The Americans are great rivals in the carrying trade, and it would be a proper thing for this government to treat primarily with the steamship companies in order to secure from them such a rate of freight as would enable us to compete with the American lines. That would not be difficult, and I do not think it has been done, or attempted

Mr. SMITH (Wentworth).

by this government. Competition is becoming very close, and it seems to me that such a step as a conference with regard to the rate of freight in order if possible to secure one that is fair and just, should be a necessary precedent to the granting of a subsidy. I would apply the same remark to the question of insurance. It is no use for us to improve the St. Lawrence, to spend millions of money upon that route, unless, by a conference with the underwriters on the other side of the Atlantic, we can secure from them more favourable terms of insurance, as we spend more money to make the navigation of the St. Lawrence safer. Now, these men reside at a distance. As the hon. member for St. Mary's (Hon. Mr. Tarte) said, they charge up all losses to the St. Lawrence route. It seems to me it would be a fit and proper thing for the members of this government who travel frequently to the other side of the Atlantic, to meet these men and to find out upon what conditions they will improve their insurance rate, provided we carry out the improvements which from time to time have been suggested, and which possibly these gentlemen might suggest. I am sure that if this government made such arrangements with these underwriters, who to a large extent, naturally, ignore the improvements we are carrying out on the St. Lawrence route, we would before long have a diminution of these insurance rates. The rates upon freight, which most largely concerns the public, are far more than the rates upon the steamships themselves. These rates have not, so far as I am informed, been diminished, in spite of all the money we have spent upon this route. They remain stationary, and will remain stationary, until we bring these people on the other side to understand that every million of money that we spend upon that route tends to diminish the danger and protect the underwriters. Some years ago, I believe, it was contemplated to organize a marine insurance company upon this side of the Atlantic. I believe that would be a proper thing to do, and this government should assist such a company if it was formed. There is no doubt that if we created on this side of the Atlantic a company of underwriters amongst ourselves, who would be able to follow much more closely than European underwriters the improvements we are making in the St. Lawrence, a very salutary rivalry will be created between those who do an insurance business, to the advantage of our Canadian shippers.

Mr. KEMP. May I ask the Minister of Customs what he did last summer, during his long stay in London, with regard to interviewing the underwriters to see if it is possible to get better rates from them on the steamers which sail on the St. Lawrence route?

The MINISTER OF CUSTOMS. Personally I did not have any such interview.