

*Saturday, April 3, 1875.*

The Speaker took the chair at three o'clock.

THIRD READINGS.

The following bills were reported from the Banking and Commerce Committee, and read a third time:—

An Act to legalize a certain agreement between the Niagara Falls International Bridge Company and the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company, and the Great Western Railway Company.

An Act to change the corporate name of the St. Lawrence Steam Navigation Company.

An Act to authorize the Canada Southern Railway Company to acquire the Niagara and Erie Railway.

A WINTER STEAMER FOR P. E. ISLAND.

HON. MR. HOWLAN said he wished to call the attention of the House particularly to the fact, in connection with the subject of his enquiry, that the contractor had the right for the next ten years to run a boat, and even if he performed the service inefficiently, he was entitled to three months' notice before any change was made. He believed it was admitted on all hands that the present boat was totally inefficient, and he wanted to ascertain if the Government knew whether the contractor was building another boat. If he was not, it would be necessary to give him the three months' notice early, as it would take eight or nine months at the very least to construct a suitable steamer; and unless Ministers had proof that he had such vessel in course of construction—one up to the requirements of the contract—next year would be a repetition of the present, and they would be getting nothing for a large expenditure. This ferry service was one of the terms of Confederation, the cost of which did not come out of annual revenue, but from the consolidated fund. A proper boat could be got for \$50,000, entailing an interest charge of \$2,000 a year. There was a considerable difference between this sum and the \$8,000 Government paid now for an inefficient boat. Such a vessel might be got as did not float in Dominion waters. The one thought of for this service would

have engines of 150 horse-power, and might be made of great service to the Marine and Fisheries Department in the Gulf, as a light-ship at times, while at others she could be used as a tug in the St. Lawrence, in cases of disaster. A gentleman was here with a model of a boat, which he (Mr. Howlan) and other gentlemen from Prince Edward Island agreed would more completely meet the necessities of the case than any they had yet seen. They believed if a steamer was constructed on this principle, she would suffice for the service. At the same time he wished no injustice done the contractor, who might have a similar vessel ready; but if there was none such, he held that the Government should immediately give the three months' notice to have the contract annulled, and another made with the owner of this model or some other gentleman. It was proposed the Government should purchase the boat after the constructor had proved beyond a doubt that the service could be performed by her, and received fair compensation for work of the trial period. That would be the better way of meeting the difficulty. He believed the Government were spending money foolishly at present. His only wish was to get an efficient boat, believing that we were paying more for that now running than would procure such a vessel. It was important for all the Maritime Provinces that a good steamer should be put on the route, because it might thus be demonstrated that the winter navigation of the St. Lawrence was practicable. The best informed men of Prince Edward's Island affirmed that it was. He was convinced the Government was desirous of carrying out fairly this stipulation of the Union—the maintenance of a winter steamer, but through the mismanagement of the Post Office Department the money had been spent without securing the performance of the work. He was quite satisfied that a boat built on the model and lines proposed by Mr. Sewell, of Quebec, could perform the service successfully. He did not think any boat he had seen would answer. Having made a mis-step in the first place, Government ought to be careful how they proceeded in future.