

pendent party in this House, I feel it to be a duty I owe to myself and to the country to make a few observations from a dispassionate standpoint.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh! Oh!

Mr. MITCHELL. Hon. gentlemen say "oh," but I am serious about that. There is now great difficulty about this question of winter navigation; everybody who has had anything to do with it—and perhaps I have had as much practical experience, in my own person, of winter navigation as most men here—everybody admits that it is one of the very greatest difficulties that we have not yet been able to solve, in connection with winter communication with the island. Now, Sir, I am not going to attempt to condemn either the past or the present Government for what they have tried to do in connection with carrying out the spirit of the agreement which was made with Prince Edward Island. But, Sir, there is one thing I want to put my hon. friend (Mr. Hackett) right about. When he was recapitulating the circumstances in connection with the admission of Prince Edward Island into the Union, he spoke of the first efforts to bring in the island and he said, mentioning a later period, that again Canada came to woo Prince Edward Island. I wish to tell my hon. friend that Canada did not then come to woo Prince Edward Island, but on that occasion Prince Edward Island came to woo Canada. After the Quebec conference, Prince Edward Island went back and refused to come into the Union; she went her own way. Canada united in the Confederation; she went on and prospered, developing the railways and developing the commerce of that Union, notwithstanding her enormous debts, and notwithstanding the stress of affairs which she experienced, Canada developed her resources, and an amount of prosperity and success after Confederation was carried out, which is a credit to the men who carried it out. Prince Edward Island came and wooed Canada on that occasion; when she became involved in debt, resulting from the construction of the railway, when she saw embarrassment ahead, then she came and wooed Canada for the purpose of getting into the Union. I refer to this matter for the purpose of putting my hon. friend right in relation to an historical fact. That, however, has nothing to do with the matter before us. We agreed and entered into a solemn engagement to place upon that line of communication a steam service, and that has not been done. The first effort that was made to do it was putting on the *Northern Light*. The *Northern Light* was built by a man of one idea, who imagined he could keep open winter communication for commercial purposes down the St. Lawrence. Sir, the thing was practically impossible; it was a commercial impossibility—just as utterly impossible, in my opinion, as the navigation of the Hudson Bay is, which we hear so much talk about. It is impossible to keep up continuous communication with the mainland. We entered into an agreement—and I am thus far in accord with the Minister of Marine—an agreement which it is practically almost impossible to carry out; but, Sir, if we cannot keep to the letter of that agreement, we ought to keep to the spirit of it. Have we done that? Canada has failed in carrying out what she undertook; she has failed in endeavoring to carry it out; she has not made the effort. The *Northern Light* was put on, and she was a failure—she was a make-shift from the start. Every person who had experience in nautical affairs knew that the vessel must prove a failure. If the first year did not satisfy them, the second ought to have convinced them that she was a failure. Did the Government of the hon. member for East York make any further efforts? No, Sir, they were satisfied with what they had done. But some eight years have passed away since that time, and what has this Government done towards remedying the difficulty? I am not going to assert that the Government have done nothing at all. The hon. Minister of Marine says they have done a great deal. He says they

have established railway communication with Cape Tormentine. What did they do that for? To give the county of Westmoreland her share in railway expenditure, in order to develop that rich and fertile county. They simply did what they had a right to do, even if no engagement to keep up communication between the island and the mainland had been made. The hon. Minister said the Government had built railways in Prince Edward Island; and I believe they did build a connection from the main line to this point, or at least a vote was taken for it. But is that carrying out the spirit of the agreement? The question is, what was done to carry out the spirit, and if possible, the letter of the engagement made between Canada and Prince Edward Island? I will not say that the Government have done nothing. But I will say they have done next to nothing. They have taken no steps to establish steam communication, except by means of a useless vessel like the *Northern Light*, which has proved a failure from the start. I speak from a non-party standpoint, and I say that Prince Edward Island has claims on the Government of Canada which we are bound to recognise. We entered into an agreement which it is impossible literally to carry out, but I believe partially it is possible to carry it out; and if, during one month of the year, it is impossible to have communication, though it can be had during the other eleven months, it is the duty of the Government of the day, no matter what party is in power, to make an effort to keep up that communication. But we have seen no effort made by the Government in power to carry out the spirit, much less the letter, of the agreement. There are no better means of communication to-day between the island and the mainland than there were 40 years ago; there is a little better accommodation in the boat-houses, perhaps, but Prince Edward Island has a right to expect something more than that. That is not what we agreed to do when they entered into the Union. Something has been said of the *Alert*. I have not seen her, and I do not know whether she is fitted for the special duty there required of her or not; but hon. gentlemen are quite right in saying that with the small steam power she possesses, it would be utterly useless to put on a vessel of that class for the performance of a duty in which she must prove to be a failure. What ought to be done is this: There is a solemn agreement; let the Government take the matter into consideration and get the best opinion they can, not the opinion of a deputy, but the opinion of a scientific man on the subject; let them secure the best advice they can obtain, and make a legitimate effort to carry out the arrangement; let them put a sum of money in the Estimates of this year with the view of carrying it out at once. It is not Prince Edward Island alone that is concerned in this transaction, the honor of Canada is concerned in it. It is a disgrace to Canada, that one Province of this Dominion should be approaching the Throne in order to lay such a paltry matter before it; and the sooner the Government of Canada makes arrangements to carry out its solemn engagement the better. That is all I have to say on that matter. I pass from that to say this. As far as I can judge, the moment any question comes up which has any relation to past years, and it is found that the Government or a Department has neglected some duty, the answer is: Look what you did five or six years ago, and we have not done much worse. If that is to be considered a sufficient answer when any Minister or Department is charged with having neglected public duty, if that is to be considered a logical reason to be presented in Parliament and to be accepted by an intelligent body like this, then all I have to say is that parliamentary representation has deteriorated and is likely to prove a failure. Sir, this brings it home to me that the condition of things in this Parliament is not sound. I cannot but feel that representative institutions in this country are not proving to be the success they ought to be.