

In the first place, no one can be better qualified than Mr. Rae for this service, by experience, judgment, zeal and physical endowments. In the next place, the men who have volunteered are mostly natives of the country; and having all been trained in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, they yield a more ready and cheerful obedience to the Company's officers than to any others. And lastly, in respect to economy, this arrangement is preferable to any other one that I have the means of making. The wages of the European party are higher than those of the men that have volunteered; and had they been employed on this service, they could not have returned to England before October or November 1850, to which time their wages would have run on. Should the next summer be even moderately favourable, I trust Mr. Rae will be able to return to this place by the end of August, or very early in September, to remove everything across the Lake, and to send the men sufficiently far southwards before the close of the navigation, to enable them to reach the Depôt at Norway House in June, when, agreeably to the practice of the country, their engagements terminate.

As Great Bear Lake is not open for the navigation of boats before August, four of the eight men who form Mr. Rae's party must have remained here till that time, to transport the instruments and stores to the Mackenzie, even supposing that the intended summer excursion had not been necessary; so that, in point of fact, the additional expense to be incurred in completing this part of the scheme of search comprehended in my instructions, is the wages of four men for one year. Mr. Rae is appointed by the Governor and Council of the Company to the charge of the Mackenzie River district, and will assume the duties of that situation on reaching that river. The provisions for the party during the summer, and for their voyage southward to some proper fishing station in autumn, are already laid up.

Should Mr. Rae succeed in exploring the passage between Victoria and Wollaston Lands, and the opening to the westward of North Somerset have been examined by the steam launches attached to Sir James Ross's ships, these being the only connecting straits between the western prolongation of Lancaster Sound and the channel which washes the continental shores, it is clear that from the Mackenzie eastward the search for the Discovery Ships along the coasts of the mainland will have been complete. And as all the Esquimaux we met at the mouth of the Mackenzie, and along the coast to Cape Bathurst, agreed in reporting that they had seen no ships, we cannot but conclude that Sir John Franklin had not succeeded in finding a passage to the westward.

There is another point on which I beg leave to say a few words. It may appear to their Lordships, considering the casualties incident to such Expeditions, unsafe to send only one officer on such a service; but, constructed as Mr. Rae's party is, I have no apprehensions on this score for their safety, even supposing that their leader should unfortunately meet with some accident. All the party have been for a length of time in the Company's service, are acquainted with all the expedients for mitigating the severity of the climate, and are more or less accustomed to note landmarks, and find their way for long distances by routes that they have once traversed. Some of them are hunters; one of them is an active and intelligent Esquimaux, who is habituated to an ice-incumbered sea; and two are Cree Indians, as skilful as the native inhabitants of these lands in retracing the way back to Great Bear Lake. The elder of these Crees is engaged as guide for the Coppermine River, having accompanied Dease and Simpson in their voyage of discovery, and being acquainted with all the rapids.

With respect to the party who are to return to England this season, the majority of them wintered at Big Island, in Great Slave Lake, and, as I have lately learnt, have had abundance of fish. Three others were sent, four days ago, across the lake to Fort Franklin, a distance of 160 miles; and Mr. Bell and I, with the remaining sapper and miner, intend to follow them on the 7th instant. Winter is still in full vigour here, the temperature sinking at night to ten or more degrees below zero, and the snow not being sensibly diminished; but we expect to find the spring thaw advanced at the other end of the lake, and to be able to descend Bear Lake River by open water early in June. Great Slave Lake generally becomes navigable about the end of that month, and I hope to conduct all the party to Norway House, on the way to York Factory, time enough to embark in the Company's ship, which leaves that place for England generally in September. It is my intention to return homewards by way of Canada, that I may