

THE NORTHERN LIGHT.

Mr. JENKINS moved for:

Copies of all correspondence between the Marine Department and the captain of the *Northern Light*, relating to the discontinuance of her trips during the month of February.

He said: It will be remembered that Prince Edward Island did not join the Confederation of Provinces which took place in 1867. For six years attempts had been made to induce her to throw in her lot with the Dominion, but those attempts were unsuccessful, until the Dominion Government agreed to provide such efficient steam service as would give Prince Edward Island continual communication with the mainland. Now, thirteen years have elapsed since this promise was made, and we still have not efficient communication. The *Northern Light*, for thirty-two days, in January and February, did not make a trip, although during that time the weather was extremely mild, so much so that there was very little ice in the straits. The people of Prince Edward Island were induced to join Confederation on this ground alone, or chiefly on this ground. They were aware of the advantages which would accrue to them from having continuous commercial intercourse with the mainland, and the promise given them to that effect was sufficient to induce them to join the Confederation. In a recent debate in another place, the leader of the Government, speaking of winter navigation, said: "We believe faith has already been kept with Prince Edward Island, so far as faith could be kept; we have done our utmost in every way to accomplish that object." Now, I maintain that the Government have not done their utmost to give us efficient steam service; I contend that they have never taken up this matter in serious earnest. It is true we have a small steamer that was put on by the late Government, built for the purpose of navigating the river St. Lawrence, a steamer which has no capacity for carrying freight, and is utterly incapable of meeting the difficulties of ice service, even in thin field ice, and therefore altogether inefficient for heavy ice. She is built in a manner that I believe is just the opposite of the model which should have been adopted, and even if able to run constantly is too small to carry any freight worth speaking of. Now, the steamer *Alert*, which has performed several Arctic voyages, and which is lying idle in Halifax, could have been put on by the Government. In October last I made application to the Department that this steamer should be put on to assist the *Northern Light*, and came, at great inconvenience, to Ottawa to lay this matter before the Minister of Marine, but I was unsuccessful. The *Alert* was built originally as a sealer, and purchased by the British Government, who greatly strengthened her and fitted her out for ice service, and I believe she is a very capable boat. If the *Alert* were put on, it would then be seen, by comparison, whether the *Northern Light* was an efficient boat, or whether a boat of a different model would not have been more efficient. The Government refused to put on the *Alert*, and I had to return home unsuccessful. In November, during the shipping season, unfortunately, small pox ravaged the island, and prevented produce being shipped until the winter season. I therefore, telegraphed, it was of great importance to the people of the island that the *Alert* should be put on, but I was told the Minister of Marine and Fisheries had been instructed that the *Alert* would not be safe in the straits, and that the lives of its crew should not be risked by the Government. The refusal of the Minister was, I think, unjustifiable, and can only be excused by the fact that he had only just been appointed, and had many matters of importance to look after, so that I suppose he was not able to look into this question. I hope, however, next year the *Alert* will be put on, and I would

suggest that more powerful engines be put into her, in which case I believe she would accomplish almost all we want, if she were put on to run between the island and the mainland at such points as may be considered most advantageous. I believe also that by putting her on we would see what sort of a steamer is really required to overcome the difficulties of this winter service. By putting a capable mechanic in her, so that he might see what modifications are required to overcome the difficulty of ice navigation, a boat could be built which would run nearly every day in the year. The voyage is a short one, and there ought to be no difficulty in providing a steamer with abundant fuel for that short passage. It is evident, in the case of a steamer making a long passage, such as a sealing vessel has to make, or a vessel going to the Arctic regions, the engines must be small, as it is impossible to carry enough coal to work large engines, but our voyage is short and coal abundant, and a steamer of that sort, with powerful engines, will be able to overcome all the difficulties.

Mr. McINTYRE. I am not at all surprised that there is a good deal of indignation existing in Prince Edward Island in reference to the manner in which communication has been carried on between the island and the mainland during the season just closed. The winter has been the finest within the recollection of the oldest people living on the island. The frost which we had last winter was late compared with that of former years. I have a distinct recollection of the day the *Northern Light* came into Souris for the purpose of being laid up. There was not a particle of ice to be seen, even by the aid of a powerful glass. There was a quantity of ice in the gulf, as I was informed, but nothing to prevent the trips being made regularly. In connection with this, I might read an extract from a letter addressed to the *Halifax Chronicle*, from Pictou, dated the 17th February last:

"The ice on the harbor, which was not very strong at any time this winter, has been weakened by the recent mild weather so as to be entirely unsafe for horses. Even foot passengers are not to be seen on it to day. The steamer *Mayflower*, which was frozen up on the 5th, has commenced running again, and makes regular trips without difficulty. The gulf is as clear of ice as in the dog days, and has been so all winter, with the exception of three or four days, and yet there is no steam communication between here and Prince Edward Island, the *Northern Light* having been laid up at Souris by order of the Government at Ottawa. Captain Cheverie, who did such good service last spring with his schooner *Josephine*, will probably commence to run again this week, or the Steam Navigation Company of Prince Edward Island may get the *Princess of Wales* out of Charlottetown and put her on the route. With the exception of two or three days this winter, regular steam communication with Prince Edward Island is a thing which might have been, but which was not."

This, I think, is quite confirmatory of what I have said in regard to the condition of the weather during the months of January and February in the Maritime Provinces. If report be true, I believe the boilers of the *Northern Light* are very unsafe. It has been stated that her boilers were worn out and leaky last fall, and that it was owing to this that the ship was nearly lost in the storm she encountered in a trip from Georgetown to Pictou in the month of November or December, I forget which. She had to go under a shortened rate of speed, and could not make the harbor of Pictou before the snow storm came on, so she had to put back. She was out all night, and she came very near being lost. I am not at all surprised that the captain of the *Northern Light* should lay up his ship year after year, seeing what the instructions are which are issued to him by the Department of Marine and Fisheries. These instructions were brought down to the Senate last winter, and I will read them for the information of the House. The first is dated January 16th, 1883:

"Capt FINLAYSON, steamer *Northern Light*, Georgetown, P.E.I.

"Telegram received urging Department order you run; responsibility is with you; expect you to run no undue risks.

"A. W. McLELAN."