

rates from Duluth, Chicago, Milwaukee, Buffalo and Fort William, Port Arthur and Parry Sound, are the same. They were very low last year; at one time they went as low as one cent a bushel for wheat—not for a very long time; but for two or three weeks the rates between these points and the Atlantic ports was one cent a bushel. The average rate during the whole season was one and a half cents, the rate being the same by the Canadian route and by the American route. What was the railway rate between Buffalo and New York? It was on an average three and a quarter cents, or, let us say, three and a half cents. The rate was not higher on our Canadian routes. Mr. Booth, of the Canada Atlantic Railway, and the Grand Trunk Railway, carried grain for three cents a bushel. There is no reason why we cannot compete even as we are located to-day with the American railroads. The reason why we have not been more successful in the past is not that the rates have been higher on the lakes from the grain distributing centres, but that the rates on the St. Lawrence route from Montreal to the English market have been higher; and why has it been so? Because as I have said repeatedly, and as I cannot say too often or too earnestly, we have not improved our St. Lawrence waterway as we should have done. We have not been quick enough in that respect. Fortunately things have been improving every day, and I have no hesitation in saying that the St. Lawrence to-day, between Quebec and Montreal is in good shape. During the last three or four years it has been widened, dredged, better lighted, and made a safe route. The St. Lawrence between Quebec and Montreal will, within a year or a year and a half, or two years at the outside, have a uniform depth of thirty feet at low water, that is to say, from the 15th of September to the close of navigation, and at other times from thirty-three to thirty-five feet of water; and it will have a width of four hundred and fifty feet in the straight parts and six hundred or seven hundred feet at the curves.

Mr. CLARKE. Will the same pilotage system continue in the future?

Hon. Mr. TARTE. I quite grant that our pilotage system has been bad in the past. It is improving, however. I wish it were improved more quickly. I wish the Department of Marine and Fisheries, as I have frequently suggested, would take charge of the pilotage; the country would then become responsible. However, that is a matter of detail. Let us go on with the improvement and equipment of the St. Lawrence. Let us do it now. I fully agree with my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce, of whose wide experience we are always glad to avail ourselves, that our waterways are the only practicable and feasible means of competition with our American neighbours.

Mr. SPOULE. Can the hon. gentleman give us the freight rates from Montreal to Liverpool?

Hon. Mr. TARTE. I have not got them under my hand. For the last year or two there has not been as much difference between them and the rates from American ports as during the past. In the past there has been a difference of at least 50 per cent, and at times more; but all that is simply a question of detail.

Mr. CLARKE. Is there any reduction in the insurance rate?

Hon. Mr. TARTE. The Canadian Pacific Railway have arranged with Lloyds for a much lower rate. I think that the Allan Line also insure at lower rates. When the insurance companies have no longer the pretext that we have been neglectful, they will be obliged to come down.

Mr. CLARKE. The experience of the insurance companies has not been a very happy one.

Hon. Mr. TARTE. Navigation companies have met with accidents in the Lower St. Lawrence as in other parts of the world, and the insurance companies have been very zealous in charging against the St. Lawrence route wrecks that have taken place even elsewhere. However, let us equip that St. Lawrence route as fast as money and energy can do it. It is easy to have first class lighthouses and fog signals. Money and energy can secure all that. During the last year or two the Department of Marine and Fisheries has moved ahead pretty fast. There is now no danger between Quebec and Montreal of a complete wreck, even if a steamer should meet with an accident. As the St. Lawrence is becoming lighted up more and more between Quebec and Montreal, in a year or two that part of our navigation will be perfectly safe. I came up the river a few nights ago in very dark weather, and I found the system of lighthouses between Sorel and Montreal so perfect that the biggest ship can navigate at night without any fear at all. The St. Lawrence is lighted up just as Sparks street is; and if we go on in improving our Canadian waterways, we can secure the trade.

Mr. COCHRANE. Are not the freight rates across the Atlantic from a Canadian port more expensive than from an American port?

Hon. Mr. TARTE. Why should they be? They have been in the past, but why should they be in the future? From New York to Liverpool the distance is 3,000, and from Montreal to Liverpool it is 2,600. If we make our system safe, why should the rates be higher?

Mr. COCHRANE. Is it not a fact that to-day the freight rates are higher from Halifax and St. John, or even Quebec, than from an American port?