

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. The service, of course, is not complained of during the greater part of the year. During the part of the year in which there was complaint, a fine of \$2,500 was inflicted on them.

Mr. GOURLEY. I find on looking at the results that the uncertainty in the time of sailing is one of the chief complaints made by the shipper, and I can understand that to be a very trying difficulty. Surely it is within the power of the hon. minister to notify these people that if the sailings are not punctual—and they ought to be punctual to the hour, much less to the day—a portion of their subsidy shall be deducted. If such a clause does not already exist, it ought to be inserted in the contract.

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. There is such a clause, and the penalty has been inflicted on several occasions.

Mr. GOURLEY. What is the penalty for not sailing at the appointed time?

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. There shall be deducted from the subsidy payable for such a voyage a sum equal to one-tenth of the amount for delays or failure to sail at the dates specified.

Mr. WADE. There can be no fault found with the contract. I do not see how it can be drawn any stronger. What I am concerned about is difficulties between the company and the shippers. We have a company admittedly in fault every year since it has had the service, and it should not be re-contracted with unless it will absolutely carry out its agreement. I would urge on the government the desirability of increasing this amount sufficiently so that other companies will compete, in which the people have confidence.

Mr. CLARKE. What is the value of the fruit shipped by this line?

Mr. WADE. The value will be something like \$1,500,000 this coming year. Last year it was very small because the crop was almost a failure and the fruit inferior. It was probably not more than one-third of that amount. This service is not for the fruit trade alone. It runs between St. John, Halifax and London all the year around, and incidentally serves the fruit shippers. It is virtually the only line by which shippers can send their fruit.

Steam communication between St. John, Digby, from July 1, 1903, to June 30, 1904, \$12,500.

Mr. CLARKE. Does this carry the mails?

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. Yes.

Mr. CLARKE. Is it for that the subsidy is granted?

Mr. BLAIN.

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. Largely for the encouragement of communication along this coast between St. John and Digby.

Mr. CLARKE. Do the vessels stop at any place between St. John and Digby?

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. It is between Digby and St. John. They have given us rather more trips than the contract called for during the past year. As a matter of course, they carry the mails, but the mail service is a small affair.

Mr. CLARKE. How many trips do they undertake to give for this subsidy?

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. During June, July, August and September, a daily round trip; during October, November, December, March and April, four times a week; during January and February, three times a week. As a matter of fact, they have made the trip much oftener than the contract calls for. The distance from St. John to Digby is forty-five miles.

A line or lines of steamers to run between St. John and Halifax, or either, and the West Indies and South America, \$80,700.

Mr. CLARKE. Do these vessels carry mails too?

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. This is a service which we subsidize in conjunction with the imperial government, we paying about half.

Mr. CLARKE. What imperial purpose does it serve?

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. They subsidize it to encourage West India trade to St. John and Halifax. In point of fact these vessels call at pretty nearly all the West India islands. They start from Halifax or St. John and call first at Bermuda, then down along the line of West India islands, bringing up at Trinidad. I think they call at eleven or twelve places.

Mr. CLARKE. What does the imperial government contribute to this service?

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. They contribute £5,000 sterling. We had this service before, but it was only about half the service which we now obtain. When the British government made their contribution, they arranged practically to govern the service.

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax). If I remember rightly, the British government made the contribution at a time when new and improved steamers were put on the route. I think one of the members of the firm who are owners of the steamships, went to England for the purpose, and had an interview with the imperial government. That was some two years ago.

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. Yes.