

like to point out that the other dredge, the King Edward, is working only part time, and that although the expenditure on that dredge may continue from month to month, owing to rough weather its operations would not be continuous. If the dredges had been kept continuously at work the shallow places would have been taken care of, and shipping would have continued. The two per cent per ton charge on shipping which was passed by order in council is also very detrimental to the port, and had the effect of causing vessels to use Vancouver port instead of New Westminster. This to my mind is discrimination, and the charge should be suspended until such time as conditions on the river are safe and the river deep enough for all ocean traffic whether by day or by night.

I have received a letter from Messrs. Balfour, Guthrie & Company (Canada), Limited. I think a similar communication has also been sent to the Minister of Marine and to the Minister of Public Works. These people make very serious complaint with respect to conditions on the river. One of their ships had to make two voyages from Vancouver to New Westminster. They say:

SS. Gracia, which arrived last week, faced the same problem, and in this connection we are having to pay diversion charges on 400 tons flour booked for loading at New Westminster in this vessel, as it was found that with this cargo on board and her draught having to be limited to 22 feet 6 inches, it would be impossible to navigate the Fraser river in safety.

In addition to the question of draught, there is also that of the inadequate aids to navigation on the river which, in foggy weather, is often responsible for most serious and lengthy delays to vessels, even though the conditions during the course of the fog may at times permit sufficient visibility to enable a vessel to navigate the river if the channel were reasonably well provided with buoys or other suitable aids to navigation.

I will not read further because I know the committee is anxious to rise. But this is a very serious matter. Probably more silt will be deposited this year than usual due to the very heavy spring freshet. The river channel is so wide, from 4,800 to 5,000 feet, that in slack tide silt is deposited; consequently a dredge will have to be kept there all the time to maintain a clear channel. After all the expenditure made on the river it will be a lamentable condition for the port of New Westminster if traffic is to be diverted to other ports, and already several vessels have ceased calling at New Westminster in favour of the port of Vancouver. I should like to have an assurance from the minister that this very serious condition will be attended to.

Hon. H. A. STEWART (Minister of Public Works): The hon. gentleman, Mr. Chairman, told me that he proposed to discuss conditions in the Fraser river, and therefore I had an opportunity of reviewing the file and looking up the facts. I can assure him that the officials of the department are fully aware of the importance of the matter. It has been very carefully studied by the engineers and in the last few years large expenditures have been made. These are being continued, necessarily so, until the plan which was devised for the improvement of the river is completed. This plan necessitates the construction of jetties, as my hon. friend says, for the purpose of narrowing the river and controlling the flow in order to help it clear itself of the silt. These jetties are being constructed. It is hoped that when they are completed the amount of dredging which would otherwise be required will be very much decreased. I think my hon. friend agrees with that. The dredge Fruehling is being sent to endeavour to relieve the condition of which my hon. friend complains. I can only say that we fully appreciate the importance of the port of New Westminster, but the conditions are very difficult; the river carries enormous quantities of silt and, as my hon. friend says, dredging would be required almost continuously to keep the river open. The funds at our disposal have not permitted that expenditure. However, I am hoping that this year we shall be able in very large measure to relieve the condition of which he complains. We will do our best with the funds available. I will call the attention of the engineer to my hon. friend's statement and urge him to do the best he can to afford this very much needed relief.

Mr. CASGRAIN: Has an arrangement been finally arrived at by the department with Price Brothers with reference to the wharf at Baie Ste. Catherines which was to have been improved?

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): No. At one time the proposition was to turn over the wharf, which is a very large one, to the dominion for a considerable sum of money. Later on an amended proposition was made for its transfer for a nominal consideration of one dollar, but the transfer would involve very heavy expenditures to make the wharf at all suitable for traffic. My hon. friend has urged the claims of this particular point for the construction of a wharf, but it would involve the expenditure of between \$100,000 and \$120,000, and no funds are available for the purpose. However, we are studying the location to see if some temporary relief cannot be granted.