

each year was settled, and the matter should be adjusted by some officer of the department. The shipper should not be compelled to go into court and perhaps waste three or four years and the whole value of his shipment in contesting the right with this company. The company could, by appealing from court to court, secure an absolute denial of justice. Consequently, I urge on the minister that every means be taken to secure the fruit-growers of Nova Scotia in the matter of the shipment of these fine fruit products. I have received document after document, and paper after paper, asserting that the greatest injustice has been done to that community. I do not wish to charge this injustice to the Department of Trade and Commerce. I have no doubt that it is due to the greed of the company to make money at the expense of the shippers of Nova Scotia without regard to the consequences. I think that can be cured by the officials of the department in some way making it so costly to this company to do wrong that they will be compelled to do right.

THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. I have taken careful note of what the hon. gentlemen state. The present contract was made with two or three very stringent clauses in it to secure proper ventilation and proper accommodation for the conveyance of apples. If the company fail to carry out these, I will most assuredly cut their subsidy.

Mr. COCHRANE. Has the minister any way by which he can ascertain whether the ventilating fans are kept in motion or not during the crossing of the Atlantic?

THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. I have on one or two occasions sent down to examine and inspect; but whether the fans are kept in motion on the voyage or not, I cannot say. Except through the intervention of the shippers, I do not see how I can obtain that information. I cannot despatch men on each of these vessels to see that that is attended to.

Mr. COCHRANE. Is that not where the difficulty comes in, that from the compartments not being ventilated, the injury to the fruit takes place?

Mr. WADE. The difficulty last year was that the company did not put the forced ventilation in as soon as they should have done. The ground of complaint was first the uncertainty of the sailings. They advertised their sailings for certain days. The shippers sent fruit down by train to the point of shipment, and there it had to wait sometimes for several days. Then that the speed of the vessels was not up to the contract. Instead of making the trip from Halifax to London within contract time, they would be two or three days longer, which was most serious for the shippers, especially of apples, it being most desirable

that the fruit should only be on board during the shortest possible period.

Mr. BLAIN. I would regard that as a very serious complaint against the hon. minister's department. The hon. member for Annapolis makes a charge against the government—

Mr. WADE. No, I did not make any charge. I said that the contract was not carried out.

Mr. BLAIN. The hon. gentleman should wait until I had finished. He has made the charge against the government that the government entered into a contract with the steamship company to ply between these two points. He has further stated that after that contract was entered into, the company changed the vessels and put on others which were not up to the contract at all.

Mr. WADE. In 1901?

Mr. BLAIN. I would regard that as a most serious charge, and the hon. minister should give us some explanation.

THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. The contract provides penalties for infraction of the contract. In several of these cases, particularly in the case to which reference has been made, a considerable deduction was made from the subsidy that would otherwise be paid, on the score that they had not fully performed their contract. Beyond that or beyond the drastic remedy of dropping this contract altogether, I do not see what we can very well do. These complaints have been investigated. I do not think there was any change in the vessels during the last year. The changes to which the hon. gentleman referred were made a couple of years ago. We have been at pains to insure the introduction of proper apparatus, ventilating and other, for the purpose of carrying these fruits in the best possible condition. That was not put in until somewhat late in the season, and I fined these people for their neglect. If they do not do better this year, I shall either cancel the subsidy altogether or fine them in proportion.

Mr. COCHRANE. Was the money paid over to the farmers who lost?

THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. No, I cannot undertake to act as arbiter between these parties. If the company damage goods by negligence, that is a matter for the courts to investigate. It is quite impossible for any department of the government to sit in judgment on disputes between the shippers and the steamboat owners. We cannot undertake to do that, but we can undertake, if these people fail to perform their contract, either to reduce or stop their subsidy altogether.

Mr. BLAIN. How much was this company fined?