

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). My attention was called to the fact that a large number of manufacturers are seriously affected by the high duties on this class of twine.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the third time and passed.

#### OCEAN STEAM-SHIP SUBSIDIES.

Mr. FOSTER moved second reading of Bill (No. 129) to amend the Act relating to ocean steam-ship subsidies.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. Please explain this Bill.

Mr. FOSTER. It is to amend the Act passed three or four years ago, in which were included the China and Japan and Australian subsidies. The Australian subsidy was put in more as a tentative measure as was also the subsidy for a fast Atlantic line, the idea being that these three services together, if they could be successfully established, would make a very excellent outside steam-ship service for our trade. The sum was £25,000 for a fortnightly service or a proportionate rate for a less frequent service. The fortnightly service could not be arranged for that amount of money, and I wish to amend it by making the Bill authorize that this amount of money may be granted to assist in establishing an effective monthly or more frequent steam service between British Columbia and the Australian colonies, including New Zealand.

Motion agreed to, Bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported, and read the third time and passed.

#### SPEAKER OF THE SENATE.

Mr. FOSTER moved second reading of Bill (No. 114) respecting the Speaker of the Senate. He said: This Bill was passed by the Senate and affects that body entirely. It is intended to overcome the practical difficulty experienced in the Senate by the Speaker not being able to call some one to the Chair when he leaves, and by the Senate not being able, in the forced absence of the Speaker, to appoint one of its members to attend to his duties during his absence. The desirability of this power being given the Senate, from a common-sense point of view, could not be doubted, but there was considerable difference of opinion as to its constitutionality, and opinions in the Senate are very much divided. However, the Senate passed the Bill by a large majority, and it has been sent to this House. And, although it is somewhat late in the session, it seems to be an urgent matter, so far as the Senate are concerned, and I have taken the responsibility of bringing it before the House and asking the House to give it the attention it deserves and to pass it.

Mr. CHARLTON. How long have the Senate been able to get along without such a law?

Mr. FOSTER. That is scarcely an argument. The mere fact that we have got along in a certain way for a time is no argument against making a change for the better. Such an argument would have prevented the use of steam-ships or electric lights.

Mr. LAURIER. But it is an argument for not pressing the matter now.

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). We all know about how much time the Senate has, during the past quarter of a century, devoted to the consideration of public business, and we know that they have succeeded in getting on without any serious difficulty during that time. If the Government choose to appoint an invalid to the Speakership by commission issued under the Great Seal, upon them rests the responsibility. But, Sir, I cannot, myself, see any necessity for the measure which they propose, even if we have the power to pass such a measure, and it seems to me that we have no authority, under our Constitution to pass such a Bill. And if we were to give our sanction to that measure, and it received the sanction of the Crown, I am of opinion that it would, nevertheless, be a void measure. Now, Sir, to pass a measure of this sort is a very serious business. Let me suppose, for one moment that the courts of the country and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council were to hold this measure void. It might have a very serious effect upon the legislation during a whole session, or during a period of two or three sessions. It might have the effect of rendering everything that was done under such a measure a void proceeding. Now, Sir, it is far too serious a matter to be dealt with during the expiring hours of a session, and I think that hon. gentlemen on both sides of the House ought to insist that this measure shall stand over until there shall be an opportunity for the representatives of the people to give it the fullest and most careful consideration. Sir, when we look at the practice in the United Kingdom, we find there that, when letters patent are issued to the Lord Keeper, or the Lord Chancellor, other parties are named in the letters patent as Deputy-Speakers. Sometimes three or four parties are so named. And, further, the House of Lords, by the law and custom of Parliament, has power, in the absence of the Lord Chancellor and the Deputy-Speakers, to name some one of their number to act as Speaker of the House of Lords. The question we have to consider, is not a question of convenience; it is a question of power, of capacity; it is a question whether, under the provisions of our Constitution, we have the power to create by Act of Parliament the office which we propose to create by this Bill. Sir, I can find nothing in the Constitution which gives us that authority. The British North America Act, at the very outset, declares that it is desirable to establish a federal union of the provinces named, and it is also declared