

STEAM COMMUNICATION TO PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

Item No. 15, providing the sum of \$25,000 for the cost of building and equipping a steam boat to maintain communication between Prince Edward Island and the mainland during winter months, in accordance with the terms of Union, being taken up,

Hon. Mr. BLANCHET asked for information in respect to the conditions of the contract made with Mr. Sewell in this connection.

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE regretted that he was unable to comply with the request at the moment; he would do so, however, to-morrow.

Mr. MASSON—Will the boat cost \$55,000.

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE—That includes everything.

Mr. MASSON—Is the boat purchased from Mr. Sewell?

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE—I stated distinctly on Saturday last, that no contract was as yet signed, but that it would be signed in a few days.

Hon. Mr. BLANCHET—Has any report, or survey of the vessel which is to be sold by Mr. Sewell, been made for and to the Government.

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE—I do not think that the Government want any such report. There is nothing up as yet but the frame of the vessel, which is, moreover, to be built under the eye of Lloyd's officer, and of an inspector to be appointed by the Government.

Hon. Mr. BLANCHET—Was the price paid to Mr. Sewell, without any report having been made to the Department?

Hon. Mr. CARTWRIGHT—The price is not paid.

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE—The price is \$50,000.

Hon. Mr. MITCHELL—Is the model of the boat such as is suitable for the purpose; and has there been a specific statement of the cost received?

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE—The price will be \$50,000, and the model has been specially designed for the purpose in view.

Hon. Mr. MITCHELL—Have you a report on that point.

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE—I presume that we have the ordinary report of the departmental officer at Quebec, and of the Deputy Minister, Mr. Smith. I do not know that any report has been made by a shipbuilder; that is a matter of detail to be attended to afterwards.

Hon. Mr. MITCHELL—Neither one nor the other of the officers named know the first thing about the suitability or unsuitability of a model. The points are—first, whether the contract has been signed, or any sum fixed, and secondly, whether the model is reported to be fit for the service contemplated. I ask the Premier whether he has finally closed the contract; and whether he is in possession of a report, not alone as to the extent to which the work has progressed, but as to the capacity and room allowed in the frame for the necessary engines, equipment, and machinery; and whether the model shows that the vessel will be suitable for the work required. He should have the advice of able and experienced men in this matter like Lloyd's Surveyor, or practical shipbuilders of Quebec, and not of a departmental officer, and of the Deputy Minister.

Mr. BOWELL—Then the telegram which the hon. member for Frontenac read the other day, and which the Minister of Finance said was not true, was literally true.

Hon. Mr. CARTWRIGHT—It was not.

Mr. BOWELL—Yes.

Hon. Mr. CARTWRIGHT—It was not.

Mr. BOWELL—The telegram was to the effect that a contract had been entered into, and when the question was asked, whether the statement was correct, the reply was that we had better look to better sources for information, certainly leaving the impression that not only did no contract exist, but also that there was no truth in the telegram at all.

Hon. Mr. CARTWRIGHT—Then the statement was not correct, for no agreement at the time had been made.