

blocked again near the piers of the Quebec bridge, and it has remained there since. They hope to get through to-morrow.

THE PEARY EXPEDITION.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. There is another question suggested by the statement just made. An Arctic expedition, that of Captain Peary, is about to be fitted out in Cape Breton, to go to the North Pole. Our interests in the Hudson bay are increasing more and more, and I think the government should take some steps to keep that expedition in their eye while it lasts, and to see that it is not merely a voyage of discovery in the interests of our neighbours to the south.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. We have a boat in the Arctic seas at this moment.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. All right; keep your eye on the captain.

INQUIRY FOR RETURNS.

Mr. AMES. Can the Minister of Marine and Fisheries tell us when we may expect some returns which were asked for on the 13th February and the 20th of February with reference to the methods of purchasing supplies in the department?

Mr. PREFONTAINE. They must have escaped the attention of the Deputy Minister because I thought all the returns asked for had been placed before the House. If the hon gentleman will send me a note of those missing, I will inquire about them.

PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY IN THE NORTHWEST.

House resumed adjourned debate on the proposed motion of Sir Wilfrid Laurier for the second reading of Bill (No. 69) to establish and provide for the government of the province of Alberta, and the amendment of Mr. R. L. Borden thereto.

Mr. F. A. LAURENCE (Colchester). Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for West Hastings (Mr. Porter), who immediately preceded me in the discussion of this Bill, indulged in an extended and somewhat involved legal argument, which I have no intention whatever of pursuing. Evidently it was quite satisfactory to him, and I would not be disposed, even if I could, to dispel that illusion. However, the hon. gentleman, in his introductory observations, took occasion to make certain charges. He charged the right hon. the Prime Minister with inconsistency in his trade policy. The only answer, it seems to me, that one need make to that charge is to refer to the trade reports and statistics of this country during the past ten years, in which are signalized the phenomenal and unparalleled success and development of Canadian trade during that period. He also charged the Prime Minister

with great inconsistency in his railway policy. Well, it seems to me that the railway policy of the government which was proclaimed only a year or two ago has received at the hands of the people, to whom it was submitted, an endorsement and approval unequalled in our history. My hon. friend had one other accusation to make and that was a charge of unfair conduct with respect to Lord Dundonald. But what were the facts in that matter? Lord Dundonald, a servant of this government, was dismissed for insubordination or something very nearly akin to it, our hon. friends on the other side sought to dignify this 'incident' into one of the chief planks in their political platform at the last election, and the result was that the people simply laughed them to scorn.

When the House adjourned last night, Mr. Speaker, or rather this morning, I was endeavouring to call attention to the history of the legislation affecting the province of Manitoba, especially with regard to the subject of education, and also of the litigation which arose out of that legislation and the painful agitation which was the result. I had come to that stage of my remarks at which I had to take occasion to refer to the two conspicuous cases arising out of that legislation. The first case is that of the city of Winnipeg vs. Barrett. That case was instituted for the simple and sole purpose of determining one point, namely, 'did the School Act of Manitoba of 1890 prejudicially affect any right or privilege in respect of denominational schools, which any class of persons had by law or practice in Manitoba at the union?' There was, in my humble judgment, but one answer to that question. Nobody could say that the system of schools prevailing in Manitoba at the time of its union with Canada existed by law or was protected by law, and the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council was that no right or privilege enjoyed by the minority at the time of the union was prejudicially affected. The Act of 1890, the Free School Act, which swept out of existence all trace of denominational schools in that province, did not prohibit or prevent Protestants or Catholics or anybody else from maintaining their own voluntary or denominational schools. They were perfectly free to maintain those schools from voluntary contributions from their own pockets as they had been doing at the union. The minority having failed in that suit, we had the other case in 1894—Brophy vs. the Attorney General of Manitoba—in which the validity of the by-laws made under the Act of 1890, imposing assessments, was questioned on the ground that the Act of 1890 was ultra vires of the provincial legislature. It was decided by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council that that Act was not ultra vires; but notwithstanding that, it was quite within the range of possibility that an Act, perfectly constitutional and valid, might yet