

In the case of both lines, roles were defined in the context of the three principal contracts available to steamboat proprietors: the mail, troop and indigent emigrant contracts. Control of these agreements gave the contractors considerable influence over the operation of the line. At the same time, the contracts themselves presented the participants with certain givens. In particular, the mail contracts specified the days and times of departure and arrival, the ports which would have to be served, and set out penalties for non-compliance. Some agreement then needed to be reached within each line as to how the proceeds of this contract were to be divided, whose vessels were to be used in case of mechanical breakdowns, which days



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individual boats took, the rates to be charged, action in the case of competition, and the conditions on which services were supplied. Principal contractors were at a distinct advantage in these negotiations by controlling participation in the line.¹²

By its very nature, the sub-contracting model of line operation was based on a balance of power — the contractor controlling certain sources of income which supplemented and stabilized the revenue from independent passenger and freight operations, and the sub-contractor providing some of the vessels necessary to maintain the service. Failure of a sub-contractor meant choosing among the potential replacements. Failure of one of the principal contractors, Bethune, offered

¹² Report of the Commissioners appointed to Enquire into the Affairs of the Post Office in British North America, D25, "Contract for Steamboat Mail between Toronto and Dickenson's Landing," Province of Canada, Legislative Assembly, *Journals*, 1846, App. F.