

towards improving the service. I regret that I cannot find in the estimates for the coming year any increase in the steamship subsidy to the West Indies, and I, therefore, suppose—and it will be with great reluctance—that we may take it for granted that there will be no improvement in the coming year.

Mr. FOSTER (Toronto). I do not think my hon. friend should take too much for granted.

Mr. PUGSLEY. Does the hon. gentleman hold out to me the hope that in the supplementary estimates, which I presume will appear a little later, there may be a vote for improvement in the service?

Mr. FOSTER (Toronto). To a man so optimistic as my hon. friend it should be scarcely necessary to hold out any hope.

Mr. PUGSLEY. I was optimistic when I had good ground for being so. If I had been Minister of Trade and Commerce during the past three months, I think I would have had an amount in the main estimates for the improvement of the service to the West Indies, and I think that before this, that service would have been improved. There are two ways of improving the trade conditions between Canada and other countries. There are two barriers to trade. One is the tariff. The other is no communication at all or inadequate or expensive communication; and the trade between Canada and the West Indies may be hampered by the nonimprovement of the service as well as by the tariff remaining as it is, and trade relations can be improved by giving a better steamship service as well as by a reduction of the tariff between the two countries. And I do think that my hon. friend, instead of giving attention simply to the one question of getting improved trade relations so far as the tariff between Canada and the West Indies is concerned, should have devoted his attention earnestly to the improvement of the steamship communication and if possible the reducing of the rates of freight. The commissioners appointed by the Canadian and British and by some of the West Indian governments as well to consider the question of improved trade relations and better steam communication made a very strong recommendation in favour of an improved steamship service. They recommended that there should be two services between Canada and the Windward Islands—one being a direct service from Halifax all the year round, and the other a service between Montreal and the West Indies but calling at St. John during the summer months, and a direct and exclusive service between St. John and the West Indies during the winter months. I had the opportunity of conferring with the representatives of the Board of Trade of St. John

to whom was entrusted the matter of considering the West Indies service, and I had reason to believe that the people of St. John would be entirely satisfied with that. I believe also it will be satisfactory to the people of the province of Quebec, Ontario and the western provinces, because in summer we would have a steamship service starting at Montreal and calling at St. John and in the winter an exclusive and direct service to the port of St. John.

With the very excellent railway accommodation we have now between St. John and the west, it was felt that that service would be very satisfactory to the people of the upper provinces and of western Canada in both summer and winter. Of course, it will cost Canada something more than it is now paying in order to secure this important service. I understand the British government has not expressed its willingness to give the aid that was recommended by the Royal Commission; but it does seem to me that if the government is—as I am glad to believe it to be—desirous of improving the trade relations between Canada and the British West Indies and of enlarging the trade between the two countries, it should not allow \$50,000 or even \$100,000 to stand in the way of securing frequent, rapid and satisfactory steamship service. Therefore, I hope that when my hon. friend comes to consider what aid he will ask his colleague the Minister of Finance to provide in the supplementary estimates for steamship services, he will not forget to put in an additional amount in order to secure, at as early a day as possible, better communication between Canada and the West Indies. The country will, I am sure, approve of the expenditure, and I have no doubt that the results will justify such action on the part of the government.

I observe that the Minister of Trade and Commerce has laid on the table a report relating to this subject of trade between Canada and the West Indies. That report recites the appointment of the Royal Commission, reports the action which was taken by representatives of the late Canadian government, as well as representatives of the British government and the representatives of the several West Indian islands. In concluding the committee state the willingness of this government to meet the representatives of the several West Indian colonies, at the earliest convenient opportunity, if possible, during the month of March, 1912. That, I presume, will be for the purpose of endeavouring, if possible, to carry into effect the recommendation of the Royal Commissioners. I hope that the result will be, if not a reduction in