

ters took place, and if the English system was properly carried out. Within the last two years, a new ship laden with cats, has been lost within a quarter of a mile of the place where she was launched, and it was very well known in the Island that this vessel was sold and taken over to Pictou the following spring when navigation opened, and put on the slip; no expense at all was incurred and the underwriters and others were swindled out of the proceeds of the vessel. This had a very prejudicial effect on honest people. He had to pay his share of the loss resulting, for, as they were aware, the underwriters fixed the rate of insurance on the average rate of losses, say for the half of the St. Lawrence, and honest insurers had to pay for these fraudulent losses. He contended that this state of things ought to be changed. The present Act was permissive and practically a dead letter. He believed that two or three investigations had been held in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, in very flagrant cases, but he did not remember of any having been made in Prince Edward Island, which was a very convenient place to lose shipping at, now that shipping was depressed and not worth over fifty per cent. of its cost a year or two ago. People so disposed could very conveniently lose an old ship at the Island and defraud the underwriters; and as the shore shelved gradually, the loss of life was very small. He said that they should have a Wreck Commissioner and several deputies. This would necessitate considerable expense; but in order to make the system complete, masters should be examined and wrecks investigated. Such Commissioner should be clothed with the same powers which the Commissioners in England possessed. Such investigations would be a wholesome check. He ventured to say that with such a system not one-half of the ships which were now lost would become wrecked. Ship-masters would then take very good care that they did not lose their certificates. He hoped that the hon. the Minister of Marine and Fisheries would attend to this matter.

SIR ALBERT J. SMITH said that this suggestion was worthy of the most

MR. DAVIES.

serious consideration; but it must not be forgotten that this country was quite different from England, which was comparatively small in extent, its coasts on every part being approachable at all seasons. A great many wrecks occurred there, and the Wreck Commissioner, on the first information, had to repair to such spots. This was utterly impossible here. With such a system, a Wreck Commissioner would certainly be required on Prince Edward Island. Wrecks there generally occurred when it was impossible to get there; and the same remarks applied to localities down the St. Lawrence,—to the Magdalen Islands, to Anticosti, and farther down. It would be quite impossible for a Wreck Commissioner to repair to these spots when wrecks took place; and he would have to wait until the men came to Quebec or some other place in order to examine them. It was at present the duty of Commissioners of Customs, to enquire into the causes of and the circumstances attending wrecks; and the Government had power to appoint a formal judicial Court to hold an enquiry into these circumstances, and, as in England, to suspend or cancel the certificates of masters or mates. This was very similar to the English Law; our country was very much larger than England; and it seemed to him impossible to carry out here the English system which was totally unsuited to our circumstances. He had never failed, when a case was brought under his notice, where the circumstances excited suspicion as to *bona fide* loss, to appoint, if necessary, a Court of Enquiry, but it had never seemed to him fit and proper to incur the very heavy expenses that naturally resulted from the holding of such an enquiry, unless the circumstances were suspicious. It only took a very short time, by Order-in-Council, to establish a Court.

MR. DAVIES said he regretted to differ from the hon. the Minister of Marine and Fisheries. The law as it stood was nearly altogether inoperative.

SIR ALBERT J. SMITH: In a sense.