

friend grumbles after it is done, while he ought to have done all his grumbling before that was done; but he grumbles every year. He is a most unreasonable man in that respect, because after the thing has been done, and done to his satisfaction, and he pays a tribute to the good way in which it has been done, he still gets up and delivers himself of the chronic grumbling that is pent up in his bosom, and which he seems unhappy not to get rid of.

Mr. DAVIES. There are 100,000 people grumbling.

Mr. FOSTER. But he should now make a very graceful acknowledgment that at last a good thing had been done, and that he was happy to compliment the Government upon it. Now, some of the evidence given in that report goes to show that something more may be done to make communication between the capes more satisfactory and more safe, by putting a steam vessel, of a certain size and power, on the route between the capes. However, that is a debatable point. My hon. friend immediately shakes his head. He does not believe that it can be improved. My hon. friend in another section of this House would say that he thought it could be done, and that this communication might be much improved in that way. When doctors disagree; when men who are nearly interested in the matter disagree; when men coming from the very Province where this is of vital interest disagree, it shows that there is difficulty, and that this difficulty is not, as my hon. friend said, altogether the fault of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, and of the Government, as he stated a little while ago. Now, with reference to the *Northern Light* and the *Alert* my hon. friend condemned me for not having listened to the junior member for Queen's and put on the *Alert*, and yet I think the hon. member said that he did not believe the *Alert* was a vessel that could do the work of going through the ice. If he did not, certainly other gentlemen from Prince Edward Island did.

Mr. DAVIES. I did not make a statement on the subject, because I have not a sufficient knowledge of the *Alert* to form an opinion.

Mr. FOSTER. Some other hon. gentleman from Prince Edward Island did, which goes again to show there is a difference of opinion about the matter. Now, I did not put on the *Alert*, nor did my predecessor in this office put on the *Alert*, simply because he came to the conclusion that she did not possess the power necessary to make her way through the hard ice during the winter between these two points. The junior member for Queen's has made a suggestion that during this summer the Government should take this whole matter into consideration to see whether the *Alert*, if provided with larger engines and made more powerful, would be able to carry out what he believes is feasible, or, at least, make the attempt to ascertain whether a vessel on her model, but with greater power, could keep up continuous communication between these two points. That suggestion is worthy of consideration, and I shall have great pleasure in giving to it all the consideration it deserves, and if anything can be done to make that communication between Georgetown, Charlottetown and Souris on that side, and Pictou on the mainland, better, and shorten the period of the interregnum, I shall gladly do my best to have that thing done. Whatever is best to be done, and can be done with fair and reasonable cost, in order to put the people of the island more nearly on a footing with the people on the mainland, it is the object of this Government to do, and it is the object of the Department over which I now preside, to try to accomplish. Now, I do not think my hon. friend (Mr. Davies) was quite wise in bringing up that old threat of a dissolution, in case such and such a thing were not done. I do not believe that the common sense and honest hearts of the people of Prince Edward Island have ever yet made such a manifesto, or will ever so raise the question of a dissolution.

Mr. DAVIES. I rise to a point of order. I think the hon. gentleman is under a misapprehension as to what I said. I never intimated as my opinion that the people of Prince Edward Island should seek a dissolution of the Union. On the contrary, I said that the Conservative Government had passed a memorial through the Legislature asking that unless the terms of Union were carried out the Union should be dissolved, and they had sent some delegates to England to further the prayer of the memorial, but I thought they had taken an improper course.

Mr. FOSTER. The hon. gentleman's argument, if it had any point, was intended to raise the threat of dissolving the Union in order to bring greater attention of the Government to this question of better communication between the mainland and the island. I say that I do not think the people of Prince Edward Island believe in that method. I believe they have a fair sense of the difficulties of the position in which, geographically, they are placed, and if they see this Government doing in the future as it has done in the past, its best, within any reasonable expense, to solve that question, the people will remain loyal to the Confederation and will be satisfied with any earnest and honest attempt to solve this important question. I have nothing more to say upon this subject except with regard to the reading by the hon. member for King's of certain paragraphs from newspapers. I did not quite hear what they were; but I think they were criticisms upon the delays which occurred during this winter. Of course, newspapers do much criticism: sometimes they are right and once in a while it does happen they are wrong, and I think it is better to judge by the reports of responsible officers, who are competent to judge of the facts, than by newspaper criticisms. The delay this winter was not due to a defective boiler, it was not due to defective machinery, it was simply due to the geographical position of the island and to the ice which forms there whether we make laws for it or against it. The vessel did the best she could. The hon. gentleman made a point of the instructions which were sent by the Department to the captain of the *Northern Light*. Those instructions were wired; and I call attention to this, that the captain was not instructed to incur no risk, but he was instructed to incur no undue risk, and I hold the Department would not have been justified in ordering an experienced captain, with an experienced engineer, who were on the spot, and who knew the state of the ice and the danger of navigating through it, to make trips one day or the other, or at any time. If a captain is placed in charge of a vessel he is a competent man. If he is a competent man and upon the spot he knows well what the circumstances are, and when he receives orders to make trips on every possible occasion without running undue risk he receives as stringent an order as I think any Department is justified in giving to a captain. I believe the captain and his engineer have this year, as in previous years, taken the same course, made their trips when it was possible to do so with anything like safety, and avoided running risks which would only have made the problem of communication more difficult and not have benefited the people of the island. It must always be borne in mind that the terms of Confederation between the older part of the Dominion and Prince Edward Island did not take in the question of freight. What was covered was simply the question of mail and passenger communication. The hon. gentleman complained that the boat is not sufficiently large for freight. That complaint is one that is made, I know; but when the hon. gentleman rests his case upon the terms of Union that complaint is not admissible, for the terms of Union do not touch the question of freight. I hope this matter will be settled so that more efficient communication, not only for mails and passengers but freight may be secured to the people of Prince Edward Island.