

with Prince Edward Island than the right hon. the leader of the present Government. If we are ever to have the terms carried out and the compact kept, we will have to get it from that high statesman who has shown such progressive ideas and wishes to cement this great Confederation from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean.

Mr. FOSTER. I congratulate the hon. member who has just taken his seat on the temperate and reasonable way in which he has discussed this question, which is one of great moment to the people of Prince Edward Island, and to the people of the Dominion as well. I do not think anything is gained, in questions of this kind, by attempting to place them immediately upon a partisan basis. I think, where a Province is interested, as the Province of Prince Edward Island is, in getting a better and an increasingly better communication between it and the mainland, it is one of the questions which may appeal to all the sections of the people of that island and may be discussed and settled on non-partisan basis. It is in that spirit, I think, that my hon. friend who has just sat down (Mr. Hackett) and my hon. friend from Queen's by his side (Mr. Jenkins) have approached this subject, and I am sure that what they have said will not prejudice their cause with the Government or the House or the people of the island who look to them to further their interest in this matter. I want to disclaim the idea that my hon. friend from Queen's (Mr. Davies) wished to make prominent, that I desired to prevent him from discussing this question. I did not. I do not think it would be in keeping to restrain this discussion in its breadth, but my impression was that there was a motion on the Order paper which would have brought up the whole question. I find, on looking over the paper, that it is not there, and I suppose it was swept off with other undebated motions a day or two ago. It was in connection with that that I said it would be better to discuss this question by itself, and to take the other discussion when the main motion came up. It was not that I did not wish to have a full and free discussion of the matter. My hon. friend, in the first place, committed himself to a rather untenable position. He condemned this Government for not keeping faith with Prince Edward Island, in not keeping up a continuous communication between the mainland and the island; and a few moments afterwards he said that, in his opinion, it was impossible to keep up that continuous communication, that there must be a period of a number of weeks in the winter season when it would be altogether impossible to keep up an efficient steam communication between the island and the mainland, so that this acknowledged impossibility precludes complaint on the part of the hon. member. I commend that opinion of his to the people of Prince Edward Island, as stating at the outset of this discussion that he believes that the demand the people of the island have sent up that there should be continuous steam communication, is an impossibility. I think he is not quite right in saying that this Government have done nothing, that they have practically, from 1878 to 1886, taken no honest step, made no honest endeavor to bring the people of the island closer to the people of the mainland by greater facility of communication. I do not think the hon. gentleman would say that in private conversation, or in a reasonable discussion between man and man, because it is not true. I ask whether this grievance did not exist from 1873 to 1878, when the hon. gentleman's party was in power, and I ask what steps were taken to mitigate the difficulty of communication between Prince Edward Island and the mainland between 1873 and 1878?

Mr. DAVIES. Do you wish me to answer?

Mr. FOSTER. I do not say that no steps were taken, I say, on the contrary, that some steps were taken, but I say that the whole drift of the hon. gentleman's speeches goes to show that no sufficient steps were taken by that Gov-

Mr. HACKETT.

ernment from 1873 to 1878, for up to to-day he declares that the communication is not at all satisfactory, that faith has not been kept; that promises have been broken, and that the condition of things is not at all what it should be, when it is 50 per cent. better now than it was at any time during the period from 1873 to 1878. It is impossible to forget the geographical difficulties, and with all deference to the opinion of the hon. member for Queen's, in my eye, I believe that the vast majority of those who, in the committee moved by himself, gave their testimony stated that it was impossible to carry on continuous and efficient steam communication for mails, passengers and freight, between the mainland and the island, during the whole of every winter season. I think the committee's report goes to show that, and I think that opinion is based fairly well upon the evidence taken. So that if between 1873 and 1878 so little has been done, and between 1878 and 1886 much more, although as contended not yet enough, has been done to bring this communication to a proper basis, it shows, not that there has been a lack of energy or of honesty on the part of either Government, but it shows that the difficulties to be overcome were very serious, that they called for a great deal of observation, that they called for tentative steps to be taken, which could not be unduly hastened and completed at once, and which, in the very nature of things, could only be gradually accomplished. This gradual accomplishment, I think, this Government has been, and is to-day, performing, and is honestly endeavoring to solve the problem of communication between the island and the mainland. Sir, in the extension of the Prince Edward Island Railway which was built by this Government, and for which a large sum of money was spent to accommodate the Prince Edward Island side, in the subsidy which was given for a railway from the main line of the Intercolonial Railway up to Cape Tormentine, for which a large sum of money was voted, in all these expenditures what has been accomplished? This has been done, that the several and necessary steps to as complete a fulfilment as can be had of satisfactory communication between the island and the mainland, have been accomplished, so that only the final steps remain to be taken towards getting as good a communication in that line as we can possibly have. For when you have a railway running through Prince Edward Island and bringing you down to Cape Tormentine, when you have boathouses built there, when you have the narrowest line of winter communication between that and the mainland, when there you are able immediately to take train on a railway subsidised and built by the Dominion Government, and which puts you into communication with the railway system of the whole continent, I say a great deal has been done to bring affairs to a state and condition where the final step, whatever it may be, can more easily and more satisfactorily be taken. Now, one word with reference to the ice-boat accommodation. The committee, which was formed, I think, in 1883, reported in that year, and said that certain things could be done and certain things could not be done. One thing that could not be done was to keep up efficient and continuous steam communication between the mainland and the island by the way of Pictou and Georgetown or Charlottetown and Souris. That was the conclusion, I think, the committee came to, and it was based upon good evidence. Necessarily, therefore, there must be an interregnum of a greater or lesser extent in the communication on that line in the winter season. The committee also came to the conclusion upon the evidence that a good deal might be done to make better winter communication between the capes, and they recommended that certain things be done, that lighthouses be built, that better boats be made, that this service be taken under charge of the Government. Although they took time to do it, yet it has been done, and now my hon.