

the British West Indies, and sufficiently speedy communication. He thought, moreover, that already a large quantity of articles, the growth of Canada, were consumed in those colonies, to which they went direct, the portion going by way of the United States being comparatively small. Our present trade, therefore, was as considerable as it was likely to be, even had we a line of steamers. But the consumption of Canadian goods and products in Cuba was very great, and in that trade we had very little participation. He trusted that if this bill became law, the gentlemen concerned in it would give great attention to the relative importance of establishing a line of Spanish bottoms, under the Spanish flag, between the Dominion and Cuba. (Hear, hear.)

Hon. Mr. FERRIER said in the United States there were differential duties against Cuba, but none in Canada. Therefore we already enjoyed an advantage in competing for this trade. He hoped it would be possible soon to establish free trade between Canada and Cuba. (Hear, hear.)

Hon. Mr. RYAN said he was very glad that hon. gentlemen on his own side of the House, and particularly Ministers, had begun to find out the value of a very old document that had lain in the archives of Parliament for some years without being acted upon—he meant the Report of the Deputation to the West Indies in 1866. (Hear, hear.) One of the things the Commissioners most earnestly and emphatically recommended was the establishment of a line of steamers between some part of the British North American possessions and the West Indies. They thought that regular postal communication by these steamers would necessarily tend to create an increase of the trade between these countries. We, the Commissioners, were met in every part of the West Indies, both British and Spanish, with open arms. The people were all anxious to facilitate trade in every way. We received documents from the British Governors of Demerara, of Trinidad, of Barbadoes, and Antigua, and of other British as well as Spanish possessions, all assuring us that those countries would be happy to join in contributing towards a subsidy for the establishment of a line of steamers between the West Indies and British North America. Well, when we came back and reported these facts, and recommended action, I am sorry to say, the Government of the day did not pay that attention to our representations which the importance of the subject deserved. (Hear, hear.) Therefore, if the country has been so long without a Mail service to

the West Indies, it is not the Commissioners who are to blame, for even since our report was made, we have individually again and again urged the importance of such a line of communication. (Hear, hear.) One time I thought that a line between Canada and the West Indies was on the eve of establishment, by means of a subsidy. Then, two years ago, I was in communication, through a very influential gentleman in Demerara, with that colony. Its people were still willing to make their contribution towards that line, although naturally complaining of the amount of time that had elapsed, and at the disappointment experienced at the non-realization of the hopes held out to them by this country. Now, I am afraid we should find it difficult to obtain their help. A line of steamers to the United States was established, to which they had contributed in various ways. What those colonies were then prepared to invest in a line to Canada, they had since spent on telegraph lines and other enterprises which had brought them into close communication with the States. Consequently less of our products went direct to those islands. There was indeed a large trade between Havana, in Cuba, and St. John, N. B. The trade in lumber from that port is considerable. In fact, we supplied the West Indies, to a great extent, but return cargoes were not so easily obtained; for them we needed more postal direct communication. At present we suffered from the slowness of the transmission of intelligence, rendering it difficult for our merchants to meet the varying phases of those distant markets. If we had a line of steamers running alternately with the fortnightly steamers from New York, as recommended by the West India Commissioners, starting from either Halifax or St. John, going by way of Portland, to take the Ontario and Quebec letters from Portland, and thence direct to the British West Indies, we might enjoy the advantage of a weekly communication with our fellow colonists. He did not know if his hon. friend asked for a subsidy in this Bill.

Hon. Mr. FERRIER—No.

Hon. Mr. RYAN was sure the merchants of Barbadoes, Trinidad, Demerara, and all the great commercial islands would be delighted to see this line of steamers, and perhaps be still inclined to contribute towards this enterprise. Great anticipations had been caused by the Canadian Commission in 1866, but up to the present had not been realised, and at last it was only the spirit and influence of private