

with a contract, and at the same time stated that if the Canadian Government, which was primarily interested, was satisfied to grant a large sum of money for the proposed service, why should not the Imperial Government supplement that grant with a subsidy? What the people of this country required was a service equal to the best that crosses the Atlantic. It was for such a service that they were prepared to pay \$750,000 a year for ten years, and which led them to induce the Imperial Government to supplement that sum by a further grant of \$375,000 a year for a like period. What do we know about the proposed service, or even about the parties? Whoever heard of Peterson, Tate & Co., before they entered into this contract? Whoever heard about the system of turret ships, which it is said is being foisted on this Government? The people of the country have had no time to consider this subject; the contract was entered into without tenders being asked and without Parliament being notified. These facts form the basis of our complaint. The justification put forward by hon. gentlemen opposite is that the contract will not amount to anything unless it is supplemented by the action and approval of the Imperial Parliament. How do we know what the form of contract will be, or what means are being urged on the Imperial authorities to lead them to modify their views as to the class of vessels required. Have we had any intimation from the Imperial authorities, or has there been any change in their opinions, since the time when they were unwilling to ratify our contract without calling for further tenders. No such information has been laid before the House, or at all events hon. gentlemen opposite do not deign to give hon. members information. If there has been a change in the opinion as to the requirements of the Imperial authorities regarding the proposed fast line, the announcement should be made to this House, and the people of the country should be given a chance to consider it. Tenders should have been openly asked for and inquired into and publicly accepted, and this course of entering into contracts secretly with persons unknown should not have been adopted, and five weeks' notice should have been given to intending contractors. These are the complaints put before by the leader of the Opposition, that instead of this House being informed by the Government as to what contracts have been entered into, some weeks elapse before the Government deign to give information to the House; further, we find that the parties with whom this contract has been entered into are unknown, that the character of the service and tonnage of the vessels is not known; and our contention is that the House should be taken into the confidence of the Government as to whether the class, speed and equipment of the vessels will be such as will prove satisfactory to the country.

Mr. HAGGART.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES (Mr. Davies). If any proof were required of the inutility of a debate taking place at present on the fast line service, that proof has been afforded by the speech of the hon. gentleman who has just resumed his seat. The hon. member is in utter ignorance of the facts connected with the letting of this contract, which he himself holds must be in the possession of hon. members before they can discuss it in a satisfactory manner. I only rise for the purpose of recalling the hon. gentleman's attention to what was stated by the Minister of Trade and Commerce, and to which he apparently did not listen. The contract which the Government has signed is a provisional contract essentially. The contract which the Government has signed is one that must be submitted to and approved of in all its details by the Imperial Government before it comes into force; and over and above all, the contract, if approved by the Imperial Government in all its details, does not have the slightest effect or force until it is laid before this House together with the specifications, and contract and specification receive the approval of the representatives of the people in this Parliament. That being the case, what more does the hon. gentleman want? If he had listened to the speech of his leader, he would have learned the great and pressing importance of not losing any time in this matter, and I will not waste time by pointing out what was so effectively shown by the Minister of Trade and Commerce, that when we did receive a proposition such as we received from eminent and responsible shipbuilders such as Peterson, Tate & Co., to carry out the Fast Atlantic Mail Service for a sum of money infinitely below that to which the hon. gentleman and his colleagues were lately prepared to commit the country, there was but one duty laid on the Government, and it was that of submitting the proposition in the speediest and most effective way to the Imperial Government and afterwards to the representatives of the people in this country. That course has been taken. The people will not have any mine sprung on them, they will be satisfied that everything has been done and every measure taken to safeguard their interests and the interests of the travelling public. I can only regret the ignorance which the hon. gentleman stated he was possessed of when he told this House that nobody knew anything of the standing of the Messrs. Peterson & Tate. Sir, when the hon. gentleman comes to inquire, he will learn, that not only are they most distinguished shipbuilders, but that their record as financial men is one which he himself, when he learns the facts, will implicitly accept.

Mr. HAGGART. I got the record from the papers, the Montreal "Star." If you read that you will see the record.