

period at \$6,000 per month. The Hugh Cann service was only a seasonal service. This is a winter service.

Item agreed to.

St. John and St. Andrews, calling at intermediate points, steam service between—additional amount required, \$1,000.

Mr. HANSON: Why is the minister increasing this subvention? This is only a weekly service, is it not, and they have been getting the regular subsidy right along.

Mr. ROBB: The contract for this service has been held by the Maritime Steamship Company of Black Harbour, Nova Scotia, since 1909. The subsidy was \$4,000 per annum up to March 31, 1924, when it was reduced to \$3,000, and it has remained at \$3,000 per annum up to the present time. The same amount was provided in the main estimates for 1926-27. The contractors represent, however, that their expenses on this service are so heavy that it is impossible for them to continue running unless their old subsidy of \$4,000 per annum is restored. The company's financial statement for the year ending March 31, 1926, has been received. I do not know whether it is fair to put this on the record or not—

Mr. HANSON: I would not ask that. I will take the minister's word.

Mr. ROBB: Their request is quite justified according to the statement.

Mr. SHORT: Now that we are increasing many of the steamship subsidies, can the minister give me any reason why the subsidy granted to the steamship line running between Bridgetown and St. John was withdrawn? That is the only subsidy of the whole lot, I believe, that has not been renewed. Is there any good reason why this particular subsidy should have been dropped from the list altogether? Will the minister give me an assurance that it will be renewed?

Mr. ROBB: I am quite willing to do my hon. friend this service, to say that if a vote is not in for that particular line, it is not his fault, because last year he represented in season and out of season that such a vote should go into the estimates. It was put in the estimates by the department, but when it came before the Treasury board it was dropped, because, I suppose, my hon. friend had not convinced us that it was necessary. I repeat, however, that if it is not in, it is not the fault of my hon. friend.

Mr. SHORT: That is not a very satisfactory answer. I would like to know whether
[Mr. Robb.]

or not it will be in next year. This service has been performed for the last eleven years, but for some reason unknown to me, and which I cannot find out, the subsidy was dropped.

Mr. ROBB: I shall direct the observations of my hon. friend to the Minister of Trade and Commerce. He will have to wrestle with it this year.

Item agreed to.

Ottawa parliament building—to improve acoustics of House of Commons, \$4,000.

Mr. CANTLEY: What has been done in that connection?

Mr. ROBB: This vote is to improve the acoustics of this building.

Mr. STEVENS: I do not notice \$4,000 worth of improvement.

Mr. EVANS: I am afraid the acoustics have not been improved very much, because I have not been able to hear yet, Mr. Chairman, what item you are reading.

The CHAIRMAN: It is item 419, on page 4 of the supplementary estimates for 1926-1927—"to improve the acoustics of House of Commons, \$4,000."

Mr. GUTHRIE: What is proposed?

Mr. ROBB: The best acoustical expert available in the United States was called in. He has examined this chamber and has reported that there is not very much to be done; so while the item is here to be voted, it is questionable whether we shall spend the money. I will read the report of this expert for the information of hon. gentlemen:

As a result of the tests, I feel sure that the House chamber is unusual in the clarity with which speech of very moderate volume can be heard and understood in it. When the House is not in session an ordinary conversational tone is loud enough to be audible if one listens, and if one is not disturbed by extraneous sounds. It would hardly be wise, however, to count on so small a volume of sound being satisfactory when the House is in session, yet it was obvious when I was there that many of the members did not raise their voices materially above the ordinary conversational level in addressing the House. It may be an effect of the extraordinarily good acoustical qualities of the room that the members may sometimes think a low tone is sufficient, but when the press representatives and the public in the galleries are to hear, it seems to be absolutely necessary that the speaker should use as loud a tone as though he were in any other hall addressing an equal number of persons.

On your suggestion I have also considered the question of supplying the House chamber with microphones and loud speakers. On the whole my recommendation is decidedly adverse. It is evident that the formal speeches in the