

posit, and of whose solvency we had received assurances from parties of high standing; and they have made provision with proper ship-building companies, and they have made provision with parties of high financial standing to enable them to carry out this undertaking, always provided that we and the British Government consent to the moderate terms which they propose. That and nothing else is the position of the matter as it now stands. Of course, the hon. gentleman does not expect, has no business to expect, that I should proceed to follow him over the elaborate history which he gave us with respect to these same contracts. I dare say the hon. gentleman may have done his best, sincerely and honestly, to obtain this service for the people of Canada at a reasonable sum, although I do not altogether approve of all the steps he took with respect to it. But I do submit to him, and I submit to the House, that it is not at all the best way, if he is desirous, as he tells us he is, of promoting this service, to interpose a discussion at this stage without asking for papers, and before any papers can be brought down to him, and when he knows that Mr. Chamberlain has stated that the British Government has this thing under consideration. Does he suppose it will help to obtain this contract at a reasonable figure, that it should be telegraphed across that he objects to all these proceedings? Does he suppose it is going to help Mr. Chamberlain in his negotiations for him virtually to declare that he does not believe that the thing can be done for less than £250,000, because he was not able to obtain a better offer than that? Unless that is his view, I cannot conceive for what purpose he should have got up this discussion at the present moment, and without any notice. Now, it is quite true that numerous suggestions have been made to us at various times as to other routes, such as he referred to; but he knows very well the understanding with the House, which we did not feel justified in departing from, the understanding which his Government had and which is virtually the understanding on both sides, was that this service was to be from Quebec in summer, and from Halifax in winter. These other matters he has alluded to, we cannot consider, I do not think we ought to consider, at all until the question of the Quebec and Halifax service has been definitely disposed of. We will probably be in a position very shortly to intimate to the House what decision the Imperial authorities have arrived at. But I submit to him, and I submit to the House, that no possible good can arise from our discussing a matter which is actually being negotiated with the Imperial authorities—unless, as I said, the hon. gentleman, finding that we have obtained a considerably better offer than was made to him, wishes in advance to discredit all chance of our obtaining a large saving, to make a saving

which, over the term of ten years that these contracts are proposed to extend, would amount to something like two or three millions to the people of Canada. That would be the result, and that is the only result that he can obtain from interposing in these negotiations at the present time. Had he given me notice of that, I should have been prepared with certain papers and documents to reply to him; and if he chooses to move for these papers, this matter can be brought up in a legitimate way and with some reasonable advantage, possibly, to the public service, at a later date; but at the present time, I must tell him that in my mind and judgment he is doing no service to the country at all by springing such a discussion on the House.

Mr. HAGGART. The House will notice that the hon. the Minister has not replied in any way whatever to the first complaint made by the leader of the Opposition. My hon. friend stated that as regards nearly every matter of importance, instead of the act of the Government being first communicated to Parliament, the information came indirectly through other channels, through an unimportant paper in Chicago, like the Chicago "Record," or by statements made by the President of the Grand Trunk Railway Company in England, or by correspondence in a London paper setting out that an Order in Council had been passed respecting a fast Atlantic service, or by a communication made to the British House of Commons by the Right Hon. Mr. Chamberlain, stating that a contract had been entered into by the Canadian Government, which was then under the consideration of the Imperial Government. The only reply made by the hon. the Minister is that when we were in power and occupied the Treasury benches the Government entered into a contract for this service without giving sufficient notification to tenderers, that only five weeks were given, during which time it was impossible to go into the necessary details and prepare tenders which would be of such a character as would bear inquiry. What are the facts in regard to this matter? No application was made by hon. gentlemen opposite for tenders; no statement was made by the Government that they had changed their minds as to the manner in which those vessels should be built. What was required was very simple information, upon which any shipbuilder could at once submit a tender, namely: the number of tons per vessel, the number of knots of speed, and the carrying capacity as regards passengers and cold storage. Five weeks was ample time to give tenderers. Why did not hon. gentlemen opposite give the same length of time to intending competitors? No, they entered into a contract forthwith. We do not know the class of vessels arranged for, or the tonnage. A representative of a company came over here from the old country and returned