

sition well knows, chose to annex to its tender certain conditions. In one case they were to have four months, and in the other six months, at the end of which time either one or the other of them might say to the people of Canada: We do not choose to go on; we do not find it convenient to go on. He recollects those terms occurring in their proposition. But in the case of the Messrs. Allan, he knows very well there were a number of other statements made which would have had the effect of putting it very completely at their option and not at ours, as to whether we got a 20-knot service, or a 19-knot service, or an 18-knot service, or a 17-knot service, or a 15-knot service, for the matter of that. Then changes were imported, and a lot of qualifications and a lot of conditions were inserted which, in my humble opinion, rendered their tender a wholly one-sided affair, so far as they are concerned, at any rate. Sir, the hon. gentleman and his friends are in a most desperate hurry now. I recollect some seven, or it may be eight, years elapsed since the date when the hon. ex-Finance Minister declared that his Government were a 20-knot Government, and therefore required a 20-knot service, before they ever called for tenders; and I recollect more, that when they did call for tenders they gave just five weeks' notice to enable all the world to compete. I think the tender under which the hon. gentleman proposed to give away, for ten years, \$750,000 a year, was issued somewhere about the first week of May, and the tenders were to be accepted somewhere in the second week of June. Now, I must say to him that I think that tenders under those conditions were very little calculated to bring out anything like the number of tenderers that might have been expected for a service of this kind.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. My hon. friend will allow me to say that that was represented as absolutely necessary, if the service was to be ready to commence two years from May.

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. Then all I can say is that the Government had come to that knowledge very late in the day. Now, the hon. gentleman knows perfectly well, everybody knows well, that if tenders for a service of that kind are to be of the slightest value, they must be for a sufficient length of time to enable plans to be prepared, to enable careful calculations to be made, to enable financial arrangements to be made; in other words, that a very much longer time than five or six weeks would have been necessary to enable persons without very special knowledge in that very difficult question, to come in at all; so that I regard tenders given under those conditions, and for that length of time, as not at all likely to afford to the people of Canada any sufficient or adequate protection or assurance

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT.

that they would get a fair tender for the service. Now, what is the actual fact of the case? The actual fact of the case is this—and as regards the question of discourtesy, it is important—that, as the hon. gentleman perfectly well knows, this is a matter in which the British Government have a great deal to say as well as ours. As this contract, before anything can be done with it, must be submitted to this House for its approval, we certainly exercise no discourtesy towards this House in waiting until we know what the English Government are going to do before we proceed to lay on the Table the full details of a negotiation of this kind. I am quite certain the hon. gentleman, in our place, would have waited until he knew exactly what the English Government were going to do. What we did do was this: we found that a very advantageous proposition indeed for the people of Canada, at any rate, was being submitted, a proposition which, if it were carried out correctly, would have given us a better service, and would have given us better boats, would have given us far more accommodation, and would have got it for two-thirds of the money. Was it our duty or was it not, to confer with the English Government, the other parties to the matter, and ascertain whether they were willing to unite with us under those circumstances? Now, Sir, it is perfectly clear that Mr. Chamberlain and the British Government had the right, and always had the right, under such circumstances, to require new tenders; and I submit that it was a totally proper thing, under the circumstances which subsisted a matter of a year ago, for Mr. Chamberlain to say: Rather than commit my Government to the expenditure of \$375,000 a year, and your Government to the expenditure of \$750,000 for a term of ten years, I will ask for tenders. Then it would be for Mr. Chamberlain or any one else to say: After our tenders only succeeded in eliciting a proposal to do this service for something like \$1,125,000 a year, after we find that that was the best we could do, when a vastly better offer was made, we must still continue tendering. Now, what is the object of tendering at all? The object of tendering is to get these things at a fair and reasonable price, and if you once get a tender, you may do just as in the case of an ordinary transaction, when you have put property up at auction; if you cannot obtain a certain sum for your own reserve bid, everybody knows it is a constant thing to accept a fair offer, when a fair offer is made; and that will be precisely our position. As to the position of Messrs. Peterson & Tate, they did not propose to construct these ships in their own yards at all, they knew perfectly well that they were not in a position to do it. So far as the information given us shows, they were persons who were to be relied upon, who were willing to make a reasonable de-