

had already been signed with the city of Ottawa. I submit it would be more in accord with the rights of this house if, when a measure of this kind is before Parliament, the ministry would refrain from finally signing a contract until its terms are approved of by Parliament. If the ministry is going to sign contracts, as was done in the case of the merchant marine, without the consent of Parliament so far as the terms of those contracts are concerned, and without appropriations from Parliament for them, and, as in the present instance, sign an agreement two or three nights before the matter comes up for discussion in this House, the function of Parliament is reduced pretty much to that of a rubber stamp. I bring this matter up because I think the Government has fallen into the habit of doing everything by Order in Council, and ignoring Parliament in regard to the very matters which it is the duty of hon. members to discuss. I should like to utter a strong protest against this method of procedure and ask the ministry to follow it as little as possible in future.

Hon. J. D. REID: In this case I think we have followed the procedure usually adopted when an agreement is being made such as was submitted to the House the other evening. I stated the other evening that the agreement was made subject to the vote being passed by the House. The agreement would have no force or effect unless the House passed the vote to pay the amount stated in the agreement. Therefore we are really submitting the agreement for the approval of the House in that way. I had no intention of signing the agreement other than in the ordinary way in which it has been done for years past not only by this Government but by other Governments. If by signing it I have varied from the procedure I am sorry, but I do not think I have. I thought it was carrying out exactly the policy as it has been carried out by previous Governments. The fact that we have to vote the amount in the Estimates should satisfy the House and settle the matter.

Bill reported, read the third time and passed.

#### CUSTOMS ACT AMENDMENT.

On motion of Hon. Martin Burrell (Minister of Customs) Bill No. 31 to amend the Customs Act was read a second time and the House went into committee on the Bill, Mr. Boivin in the Chair.

[Mr. King.]

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I think the minister should explain the purpose of the Bill.

Mr. BURRELL: The Act requires permission to import fire-arms except from the United Kingdom, and this strikes out the words "except from the United Kingdom" in order to give the Government control over the disposition of all fire-arms brought into the country.

Bill reported, read the third time, and passed.

#### DOMINION LANDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN (Minister of the Interior) moved the second reading of Bill No. 35 to amend the Dominion Lands Act.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Will the minister explain?

Mr. MEIGHEN: The House, on the introduction, had a brief explanation on the objects of the Bill. The rest will appear very clearly from the side notes to the Bill itself. The object of the first section is to enable a homesteader to get his patent though not naturalized, he being debarred from naturalization on account of inability to speak English or French. Provision was made last session to enable persons now debarred from naturalization to obtain patent to a homestead upon securing a certificate of qualification for naturalization barring certain recent statutory requisites. A judge could not give a certificate that a man was qualified to be naturalized unless he could speak English or French and unless the judge so certified. That does not seem to be quite fair to an applicant who entered for his homestead prior to such statutory provisions existing. Consequently, if that is the only reason why he should not be naturalized, we do not want it to stand in the way of his getting his patent. That is the object of the first section. The second section has to do with the same matter. The third section provides for power in the case of school lands to enable the department to sell upon a valuation a portion of a quarter section or of a half section that may not have been included in the original sale but which later can be added. We now by statute must sell by auction. Cases, arise, for example, where a lake is in the land sold and as the lake recedes there is more land available. It does not seem the part of wisdom that that extra territory should be put up at auction because the only man to whom it is of any use is the man who owns the quarter sec-