

reason, that we knew that the Messrs. Allan, in connection with the Glasgow firm who joined in making the tenders, presented an amount of capital and resources that would enable them at once to carry the work to vigorous completion. Under these circumstances, negotiations were entered into with the Messrs. Allan and the Colonial Office, and we arrived at a point which enabled us to agree upon a provisional contract; and all that was necessary, so far as the Government of Canada was concerned, was the signature of His Excellency the Governor General. Hon. gentlemen opposite know that an Order in Council was prepared authorizing the Government to make this provisional contract with the Messrs. Allan, subject to the approval of the House when it should meet, and so much importance did I attach to this work being carried rapidly and promptly to completion, that I took the liberty, when leaving office, of writing a letter to the hon. gentleman who succeeded me, suggesting that if the assent of the Governor General to this provisional contract were obtained, a year would probably be saved. It requires something like two years to construct, with due regard to economy, ships suitable for so great and important a service; and as soon as the assent of His Excellency was obtained to the proposal, it could be submitted for the approval of Her Majesty's Government. I had no doubt as to what the result of that application would be, because the matter had practically been settled between the Colonial Minister and myself, and the inviting of the new tenders had disposed of the only difficulty that stood in the way of the Colonial Minister applying to Parliament for the aid we required. I am sorry to say that this matter was not promptly carried out. Every person knows that the Messrs. Allan were the pioneers of the Atlantic service between Great Britain and this country; and, in addition to the fast ships, capable of maintaining an average speed of 20 knots at sea, which would require to be built under admiralty supervision, they had a great freight service at their disposal, with which they could implement the fast service in such a way as to make it most advantageous to Canada. The hope I entertained that this matter would be carried to a successful completion did not apparently meet with the concurrence of hon. gentlemen opposite. I cannot forget that when I made a statement on this subject to the House last session, my hon. friend the First Minister followed me with a hearty endorsement of the proposal. He stated that he had arrived at the same conclusion, that it was absolutely necessary that Canada should possess a fast Atlantic service, and his only doubt or hesitation in connection with the matter was as to the desirability of endeavouring to ascertain whether it would be practicable to obtain greater freight facilities in connection with

that service. We cannot forget that in taking that position the hon. gentleman met with unexpected opposition on the part of some of his supporters, although I am inclined to believe that the great body of the gentlemen on that side of the House will be prepared to give a hearty and enthusiastic support to this measure—a measure which I say has been dealt with, not from a party standpoint, but which has commended itself to the approval and support of gentlemen on both sides of this House. I have heard it insinuated in various quarters that it would be impossible for us, even with a 20-knot service from Quebec in summer and Halifax in winter, to expect to draw a large amount of travel from the western states as well as from the various portions of Canada. I made some inquiry on that subject, and I found, on reference to the books of the Messrs Allan, containing an account of their passenger service, that at a time when their service from Canada could compete with that from New York, they booked passengers from the United States to the extent of \$27,000 per month. I mention this in passing in order to show the House how important it would be for this country to enjoy the advantage of having the great tide of travel of that description brought to this country, one of the advantages of which would be that capitalists who would thus travel through Canada would naturally have their attention drawn to the great field for the investment of capital which this country presents.

I am only too glad to learn from any source that the Government are disposed to press this matter to a conclusion, but I confess that I am greatly disappointed when I find that the hon. member for Quebec West (Mr. Dobell) is entrusted with the negotiations in this matter. I am surprised and disappointed that these negotiations should have been entrusted to a gentleman who, in addressing the Board of Trade in Quebec, and afterwards from his seat in this House, used strong arguments in opposition to the establishment of a fast Atlantic service, and whose arguments were therefore calculated, so far as the hon. gentleman's statements could have any effect, to discredit this service, not only in the estimation of this House, but of the Imperial Government or of any person who might attach importance to them. I do not question at all the good faith of the hon. gentleman nor do I propose to discuss his statements here, but it seems to me that if the Government were anxious to secure this great boon they would have done better to entrust the negotiations to some person who really heartily believed in the importance and value of the scheme. I think they would have done better to have placed the negotiations with the Imperial Government—with whom, I have no hesitation in saying, the whole question as to amount