

standing is that contracts exist in connection with some of these services. The Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett), who is in his seat, has always been a great advocate of the sanctity of contracts. When he was on this side of the house and since, he has stated in very serious tones that a contract should not be disturbed, whether it was one in connection with tariffs or one in connection with something else to satisfy the special interests of this country. My understanding is that contracts have been entered into with different steamship companies throughout this country for a period of five or ten years at specified prices, yet the votes have been reduced for all the services except one in British Columbia. I do not know whether this has been done by the statistical branch of the minister's department, which he was so anxious to protect this afternoon, or by some other official, but the fact is that reductions have been made. If these steamship companies have a contract with the government I should like to know why these votes have been reduced.

Let me give two or three instances. I see sitting across from me two very prominent members of the house, the hon. member for Queens (Mr. McLure) and the hon. member for Pictou (Mr. Cantley). I am delighted to see that the hon. member for Queens has moved up so that he can hear what I have to say. I notice that the item in connection with the service between Charlottetown and Pictou has been reduced from \$30,000 to \$20,000. I think the hon. members for Queens and Pictou will agree that this is a very important service between the mainland of Nova Scotia and the garden of the gulf, Prince Edward Island. Not only has this vote been reduced from \$30,000 to \$20,000, but if my memory serves me aright, and I have a pretty good one—again I refer the Prime Minister to his remarks on the sanctity of contracts—a contract was entered into either by this or by the last government for a ten year service between Pictou and Charlottetown, not for \$20,000 a year, not for \$30,000 a year, but for \$40,000 a year.

Mr. BENNETT: If parliament voted the money.

Mr. DUFF: I thank thee, O Jew, for that word. That is just exactly the trap I would expect someone to fall into "if parliament voted the money." The minister is quite right but only up to a certain point. What is that point? As I say, the contract was for \$40,000. If the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Stevens) had put an item in the

estimates for \$40,000 and the hon. member for Queens moved to reduce it to \$20,000 and was sustained by the committee, then the Prime Minister would be right. But a contract has been entered into and the government does not wait for this committee to reduce the amount; in spite of the contract and in spite of the sanctity of that contract, the government reduces the amount from \$40,000 to \$20,000. Now where is the Prime Minister's argument that this is correct? We have not been asked to vote \$40,000 in the case of this Pictou-Charlottetown service; we have been asked to vote only \$20,000. I say to the Prime Minister that if he will increase this vote to the amount of the contract, \$40,000 and the committee decides that it will vote only \$20,000, then it will be time enough for him to say that the government can pay only what parliament votes. We cannot move to increase a vote, and with a contract still outstanding, this particular vote should never have been decreased. The Prime Minister says that all the government can do is to pay the money voted by parliament, but I think he knows better than that. He is a great constitutional lawyer and he knows that if the government decided to increase this vote to \$100,000, it could be put through the house with the government's present majority. Yet the Prime Minister tells us that all they can pay is the \$20,000. Having entered into a solemn contract to pay a steamship company a certain amount of money, that company having bought a steamship for the purpose of carrying out that contract, and having fitted up that ship, this government has no right to reduce the subsidy to that steamship company by fifty per cent. It is not fair, it is not decent and, what is more, it is not good business.

I notice there is also an amount for a service between Mulgrave and Arichat and Canso. I am sure that my hon. friend the Minister of Finance will lend his support in connection with this item, because Arichat happens to be in his constituency, a constituency that did him the honour of electing him by acclamation. I had to fight for my seat in this house but the Minister of Finance came here without a contest, and I dare to say that I had something to do with it; they consulted me as to whether they should oppose him or not and I told them not to do it. The Minister of Finance ought therefore to be sympathetic towards me; I am sure I shall have his sympathy. Well, what do we find here? What do we find in this great and important constituency represented by my hon. friend? I do not like to make