

Similar requests, applications and proposals come from other interests in other parts of Canada, and it has been the policy of the board to do in these instances exactly as it has done in this. I do not wish to take up unduly the time of the house but I feel that I should at least make the statement that the charge quoted in the editorial by the hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. Gillis) is entirely unwarranted and unfounded.

While I am on my feet there is one other thing indirectly connected with this which I should like to say, and it is this. From time to time the national harbours board is attacked because of the fact that it does not consent to what local interests ask or does not grant the demands of local interests. At the moment I am not referring to Halifax any more than I am to any other port or harbour which comes under the jurisdiction of the national harbours board. In these instances the board is in the peculiar position that it cannot reply to the accusations. It is an emanation of the crown and it has not been in the habit, nor has it adopted the custom, of replying to all the charges made against it in the press.

May I say here that the national harbours board has done an excellent job in the matter of administration of harbours in this country, particularly having regard to the condition of things as taken over by the national harbours board, when it was incorporated by act of parliament. The house knows what conditions were like in those days. It knows that the report of Sir Alexander Gibb dealt with the most unsatisfactory condition that existed in a number of harbours across Canada. The board took over that condition, and the financial position of the harbours in Canada to-day is far better than it was at that time.

When the national harbours board took over the port of Halifax in 1935 the operating revenues were \$500,936, the operating expenses were \$504,851 and the operating deficit \$3,915. In 1945, because of the policies of the board, the operating revenues were \$1,653,000 the operating expenses \$1,033,000, showing a surplus of \$619,797. The statement I make is in reference to the harbour of Halifax. It goes to show that the position of Halifax harbour in 1945 is far better than it was when the board took over. The same can be said of all other units under the jurisdiction of the national harbours board. In 1935, these units showed operating revenues of \$7,427,000, and operating expenses of \$4,975,000, leaving an operating surplus of \$2,451,000. In 1945 the operating revenues of all units under the jurisdiction of the harbours board amounted to \$13,395,000, and operating expenses \$6,851,000, leaving an operating surplus of

[Mr. Chevrier.]

\$6,554,000. In my judgment this is a proud record, and anybody who studies the figures, if impartial, will, I feel sure, agree with this.

The national harbours board are criticized and blamed for leaving undone things which they are not authorized to do under the National Harbours Board Act. They derive their authority from that act, and certainly it is not authorized in any sense to turn harbour facilities placed under the board for administration as a harbour facility, to other parties to be used as a foundation for a flour mill.

I think it my duty to tell the house that the decision of the harbours board to act as it did was in accordance with the terms under which it was set up by parliament; that the decision to which it came was the only decision to which it could come under the circumstances; that the matter was given careful consideration not only by the Department of Transport but also by other departments of government, and that even to-day the national harbours board stands ready and willing to facilitate the establishment of that mill.

Mr. GILLIS: Would the minister answer a question? In the minister's statement there was one error which I should like to correct. This matter was not raised by an editorial; the editorial merely quoted the minister of industries of the Nova Scotia government. He raised the question. The minister said that there was an alternative site available in Halifax, but someone said that it was not suitable. What reasons were given as to why the site which was available was not suitable? What was the matter with the site?

Mr. CHEVRIER: All I can tell the hon. gentleman is that our engineers went there, made a survey and suggested an alternative site. I am informed the reasons were that the site was not close enough to the pier, and that the milling industries wanted the use of pier 23, or pier 26, which was immediately opposite. It was either the one or the other. The engineer who made the report—and he is one of the outstanding engineers on the staff of the national harbours board—reported that there was an alternative site and that that site was not found satisfactory by the milling industry.

Mr. BLACK (Cumberland): As I understand the statement of the minister, there is no expectation—

Mr. SPEAKER: I am sorry, but I will not permit a debate on this question.

Mr. BLACK (Cumberland): I should like to clarify a statement made by the minister.