

istration for political and partisan purposes, this bill is surcharged three times with the same prospective evils. It is an attempt, and a deliberate attempt, of the government to secure the employment of scores and hundreds of persons who will not be subject to the civil service regime or to examination and appointment by the civil service commission. I know the government have a majority and they may put it through, but I call attention to the fact that this is a flagrant violation of civil service principles to which successive governments have adhered in the past.

Mr. MacNICOL: There are now doubtless large numbers of employees in the service of the different harbour boards throughout the country. Is it the intention to reengage all those who are eligible on the present staffs or is it intended to employ entirely new staffs?

Mr. HOWE: I trust that my hon. friend from St. Lawrence-St. George (Mr. Cahan) is not serious in suggesting that the civil service commission be allowed to select the staffs for all the business that is conducted by the harbour boards from Halifax to Vancouver, fluctuating staffs, and so forth. I do not like to be unpleasant about the thing, but it does seem to me that my hon. friend might have made some such suggestion when his government was in power and the harbour boards were operating exactly the same business. I cannot imagine that he would seriously make the suggestion. I do not think it would have been wise to put the staffs under the civil service commission then any more than it is to-day. I cannot think of a better qualified board to determine the personnel than the three experts whom we shall appoint to have direction over this enterprise. I cannot think of any better way of building up a service that will be a credit to the dominion than to allow the commission to pick its own personnel, place them on a basis of efficiency, and carry on from there.

Mr. CAHAN: I suggest that the hon. member himself last evening made certain declarations with regard to evils which he alleges have grown up under the existing system, and I suggest that by this bill the introduction of patronage which will be under his control will lead to evils far greater and more intense than those to which he called attention last evening. I have no doubt about it. The argument of the hon. gentleman that the previous government should have introduced a reform in respect to the administration of

these boards is not altogether relevant because the previous government did undertake to initiate reforms along the line of the report which my hon. friend has adopted.

Mr. HOWE: Would my hon. friend mind detailing the steps which the government took?

Mr. CAHAN: The first step was to have a thorough investigation.

Mr. HOWE: What was the next step?

Mr. CAHAN: That is the step that was taken. The other matter, as explained by the leader of the opposition (Mr. Bennett) was the development work in connection with certain of these ports. This work was in progress and it seemed inopportune to introduce a measure of this radical character so near the end of the session. The other phase concerns who would be best qualified to select the employees of these boards and the hon. gentleman suggests that the three men whom he will select will be best qualified. Following out that same argument, I assume that the hon. gentleman thinks if he were made prime minister of Canada he would be best qualified to select all the civil servants in every branch of the government. The argument leads to that. I suggest that this bill provides for the hon. gentleman a system of patronage unprecedented in the administration of any department of the government. The effect of this bill is to place the harbour boards under the administration of his department; his department assumes responsibility. If my life is preserved for three years, I shall be very happy to sit opposite to the hon. gentleman and discuss the pernicious practices which will inevitably grow up and the evils which will undoubtedly ensue from the adoption of the system of patronage which is embodied in this particular clause.

Mr. HOWE: I am glad the Gibb report is referred to, but apparently hon. gentlemen have never read it. Sir Alexander Gibb covered this matter very carefully in paragraph 92 of the report, which reads:

The central harbour board should act under the Minister of Marine, but not under any department. It should have wide discretionary powers in the matter of rates, salaries, terms of service, the settling and administration of contracts, the engagement of special technical assistance, the sanctioning of emergency capital expenditure, and the control generally of all construction and port operations.

That is what my hon. friend's expert said about this.