

chance to be heard. What is he proposing to do? To read certain documents he takes from certain papers with reference to harbour boards and members of harbour boards scattered all over this country from Halifax to Vancouver, men who have given their lives to the service of their country? Does he assail Professor Brock, whose life is gone? He assails him. He assails decent men in Montreal, Halifax, Saint John, men who have given their very best to their country. He now says that this is the most shameless breach of trust that has ever happened in the Dominion of Canada. He has said too much or too little, and if he makes that statement he cannot read from a document without these men having a chance to be heard and offering any explanation they desire. These men cannot be charged *ex parte*. There must be an opportunity afforded by a parliamentary committee for these men to appear and make their explanation. The minister says that his remark applies to no period and to no particular board. Therefore it is universal. It covers all the harbours we have in Canada. It covers their administration for years before he was in Canada. His statement refers to men who value their reputation just as much as he values his, men who are as honourable and have as decent a record as business men as he has, men whose reputation will stand the closest investigation that may be brought to bear upon it by any tribunal. These men have a right to be heard. I thought when the minister rose that I would hear a decent explanation with regard to his statement, but he not only repeats it but emphasizes it. Now it is quite clear that these men must have a chance to be heard. It is no good to say: I have here a lot of information. That is not under oath. What importance can one attach to that?

We have had cases of this kind before in this country and we know perfectly well that opportunity for defence must be given. During the last parliament charges were made with respect to the Montreal harbour. Charges were made in the press with respect to the guaranteeing of securities amounting to \$19,000,000 for the building of a bridge in that harbour. One of the first things we did after coming into office was to appoint a firm of auditors, Price, Waterhouse and Company, to make an investigation. They did investigate and made a report which was tabled in this house and which contained a detailed history of the expenditures for the construction of that bridge. It was alleged by an hon. member who sat for a western constituency that there were improper things in connection with it, but we satisfied our-

selves from facts that were produced to the auditors that we would have to go entirely beyond Canada in order to deal with what was alleged, and we had no jurisdiction.

In connection with the harbour at Halifax there was an investigation that was partly completed. This was carried on under Mr. Justice Orde, who has since died. I notice an item in the estimates providing for the payment of certain accounts which were incurred. These men and their successors are now suffering under that charge. The men at Saint John and their successors are in the same position, and the same applies to the men at Three Rivers, Chicoutimi and Quebec and their successors. Is that fair? I do not think there is any harm in saying to the minister that he is inexperienced. No minister would ever think of making a charge of that kind against men who cannot be heard, who are not here, who have not an opportunity to appear, who have wives and families, whose honour and good names are just as valuable as the hon. gentleman's. Their children are proud of their fathers and no one has a right to make a charge of that kind without giving them a chance to be heard. There is only one way in which this matter can be dealt with; it should be referred to a proper committee for the purpose of investigating the charges which he makes against these men during the years they have administered these harbours as commissioners.

Mr. POULIOT: How many children of these men have been affected by the words of the minister?

Mr. HOWE: I made it quite clear when replying to the hon. member for Outremont (Mr. Vien) that I was not mentioning any names. The documents I referred to are public documents, the files of the harbour commissions. I simply say that the system is not one that should be perpetuated. I do not know that I went any further than that, and I do not think the right hon. gentleman was called upon to go just as far as he did go in his last statement.

Mr. BENNETT: How could I do anything else?

Mr. VIEN: On the second reading of this bill I expressed my opinion as to the merits and demerits of the principle involved therein. I suggested then to the government that every section of the country should retain as much local autonomy as possible. Very little good can accrue to Canada from the centralization of the control of our harbours in the hands of three government officers sitting in Ottawa. No matter how