

Adjournment Debate

of Canada? I did not say the "civil service" but Public Service in the sense that the National Harbours Board group is being pitted against the ports group within the Department of Transport. I do not know what assurance can be given that people can be guaranteed that they do not get shafted, to the favour of some other group.

Let me put it this way, Mr. Speaker, if I have one minute left. Years ago I wrote an exam on marine law, believe it or not, which is rather close to this particular topic. I walked out of Dalhousie Law School on that afternoon more bloodied than bowed, or perhaps I should say both bloodied and bowed, and decided I would never write an exam for a job again. So far I have stuck very religiously to this. I know people both in the National Harbours Board and in the marine division of the Department of Transport who would share exactly that philosophy. They went through this job writing business about 30 years ago and they just do not want to get themselves mixed up in it now. Unfortunately, I think they are being mixed up in it.

I think it would have been much simpler if we had had some act of parliament which would have transferred, melded or wedded these groups together, rather than putting them in the position of fighting with each other for positions, I gather fighting very bitterly and to the detriment of a great Crown agency which is still in existence.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Charles Lapointe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, it is with renewed pleasure that I find myself again sizing myself up to the rhetorical talent of the hon. member opposite and I will concede that I will not dare compare my listener's ratings with his! Surely, with this new equipment monitoring us, Hollywood contracts will have to go to my colleague on the other side.

Coming back to serious matters such as this issue of hiring for the future Canadian Harbours Commission, I will endeavour, Mr. Speaker, to try and explain to the hon. member what exact procedure is being followed. The hon. member must certainly recall that last November 24, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) whom I am honored to represent, informed this House that he had asked the employees of the central administration of the National Harbours Board and the personnel of the Harbours and Piers Division of Transport Canada to apply for the new positions created in the Canadian Harbours Commission so that Transport Canada may confirm their new assignments when Bill C-6 is passed.

What the hon. member is now saying, Mr. Speaker, is that those people, some of whom are not legally part of the Public Service, except when it comes to restricted competitions, are asked to compete with each other for their own jobs. So if the hon. member thinks these employees apply for competitions to fill in their own positions, such is certainly not the case.

Most of the positions and services of the Canadian Harbours Commission are new, since most of their attributions and responsibilities will be transferred to 20 autonomous harbours

[Mr. McCleave.]

commissions once this bill is passed. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, the attributions and responsibilities of these new positions put them at different levels and classifications for which it is necessary to recruit candidates through competitions so that the employees of the central administration of the National Harbours Board may be eligible and also to abide by the principle of promotion based on merit within the civil service.

[*English*]

Also, I should like to point out that the Public Service Commission has the exclusive right to appoint personnel to these new positions, a right it does not have for personnel currently employed by the National Harbours Board under the current legislation. Yet, the Public Service Commission and the Department of Transport have agreed to open the initial area of closed competition for these new Canadian ports commission positions to only those employees of the National Harbours Board, and ports and harbours personnel of the headquarters division and its regional components, in order to give them every possible advantage in qualifying for these new positions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

LABOUR CONDITIONS—LAY-OFFS BY CANADIAN NATIONAL—
UNION REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION—GOVERNMENT
POSITION

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, a week ago I directed a question to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro). I asked him whether he would give favourable consideration to the proposal by the Canadian Brotherhood of Transport and Railway Workers and appoint a commission to look into the effect of the Canadian National Railways laying off 6,000 of its employees in recent months. The minister replied by indicating that he had talked to representatives of the railway workers and decided not to appoint a commission to look into that question, but was considering a commission which would look into the lay-off of employees everywhere. Such an inquiry is necessary, but it will do little to help the large number of workers laid off by the CNR.

It is not an accident that the CNR has laid off people. It is part of a new policy, for which the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) is responsible to some extent. He believes in a policy of user pay and profit first, and service to the customer and the welfare of the railway employees last.

● (1812)

In the not too distant past, in the last year or so, workers represented by the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Transport Workers have lost 2,600 jobs, and other union workers employed by CNR have lost 3,400 jobs. Four out of five of the jobs lost have not been lost because of loss of business but rather because of the arbitrary decision of the CNR to show profits at each of its five profit centres, and to cut back on service wherever they cannot show a profit. Each of its profit centres must show profit, and the way that will be accomplished is to cut the service which has been traditionally