

*National Harbours Board*

all into one commission. The purport of the amendment is to reduce these seven commissions to three instead of one, and therefore I believe it is strictly in accordance with the general principle of the bill, except that it does not go as far as the bill itself.

As to the point raised by the hon. minister (Mr. Howe), I suggest that the amendment does not increase the present expenditure of money, but instead of reducing it to the extent involved in maintaining only one harbour commission, it reduces it only to the extent of the expenditure involved in maintaining three harbour commissions. I suggest that in respect of both the expenditure of money and the principle of the bill, the amendment is in order.

Mr. BERTRAND (Laurier): Furthermore, section 37 of the bill declares that the corporations and the board are hereby declared to be amalgamated, so that the principle of the bill is to amalgamate a certain number of commissions, and we are simply asking that there be three commissions instead of seven.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Young): The amendment provides for three boards instead of one. Whether the government would pay to the members of three boards what it would pay to the members of a single board is a very difficult point for the Chair to decide, but it does seem to me that inasmuch as three boards are proposed instead of one the expenditure naturally would be increased. Therefore I am inclined to the view, and so rule, that the amendment is not in order.

Mr. WALSH: Coming back to the point raised by the Minister of Marine, I have already, as this house knows, endorsed the principle of this bill with certain qualifications. I have also intimated to the house the high esteem in which I hold the present Minister of Marine. But during the course of his brief remarks he made a statement to which I must take exception. I do not think it is fair to cast a reflection upon the harbour boards that have displayed considerable efficiency and public zeal over a period of twenty to twenty-five years by a statement such as this, "a shocking betrayal of public trust." That might refer to certain boards in certain localities, or to certain members of certain boards, but I do not think the Minister of Marine would care to make such a sweeping statement in connection with all harbour boards that have been in existence in connection with our national harbours or in respect of all members of those boards. In justice to these men who have so faithfully dis-

[Mr. Vien.]

charged their duties and in justice to those boards that have displayed considerable efficiency I feel that the minister should, and I hope that he will, qualify his statement and qualify it considerably. I know there are harbour boards and certain individuals against whom we could level such accusations, and probably in some cases they would be well founded, but I must say this: I do know certain members of certain harbour boards; I am conversant with the administration given by certain harbour boards in certain of the larger cities of Canada, and I must say that the minister's statement cannot apply to certain harbour boards and to certain individuals who have served on those boards. I refer particularly, of course, to the harbour board that has just ceased to exist in Montreal. I refer particularly to the chairman of that harbour board. He is a man in whom I have the utmost confidence. There are others that I could name in other cities, and no doubt other hon. members are interested in harbour boards in their own particular cities and could cite numerous examples on whose behalf exception should be taken to the minister's statement. I would ask the minister if he would place on Hansard a qualification of his statement so that all harbour boards will not be included and so that all gentlemen who have served on harbour boards will not be included in such a sweeping and general statement.

Mr. HOWE: I say at once that I did not intend my statement as reflecting on individuals, but I have made a careful study of the record of harbour boards as found in the Department of Marine and I am unable to distinguish between the records of harbour boards. If my hon. friends would care to have me do so, I will give them the history of any one. I may say that it is confined to no particular period and to no particular party. They are all about the same. I shall be very glad to give my hon. friend the record if he doubts my statement. It is not my purpose to dwell on that side of the matter. I think everybody who is familiar with harbour boards knows something about the back-bone of the thing, and that the system of control is wrong. I hope that qualification will suit my hon. friend, but that is as far as I care to go.

Mr. BENNETT: The minister has said either too much or too little, one or the other. He has condemned the character of decent Canadians. He has charged them with malfeasance in office, with breach of trust, with dishonourable conduct in the performance of their duties, and he cannot produce sheets of paper ex parte without giving these men a