

If there was one clause of the bill to which I objected, it was the clause we are now discussing, namely 7. A little while ago the government accepted the suggestion that they should take full responsibility for making appointments. I was rather in favour of the panel idea, if it could be made nonpolitical—I admit it would be difficult—because I always had in my mind that if the government would change clause 7 so that it or the House of Commons would have the power to discharge these trustees, their responsibility would be very well maintained. Now they have declined to eliminate clause 7. There are two reasons given, one by the Minister of Railways and the other by the Prime Minister. The Minister of Railways gave as his reason that a politically minded government, if we wish so to describe it, might unfairly discharge these trustees. I believe I am correct in my interpretation of what he said. I have put it bluntly, but I believe that is what was at the root of his statement, namely that a politically minded or partisan minded government might unfairly desire to discharge these trustees, and that the Senate would prevent such an injustice. I contend that if it be true that for political reasons a Senate might prevent a government from discharging these trustees, it is just as fair to assume that a politically minded Senate, or a partisan Senate might prevent the removal of these trustees for the same political reasons. So that upon that score it seems to me that we are even.

The Prime Minister advanced another argument in which there may be some weight, but against which I think provision could be made. He stated that unless the men asked to take office as trustees could be assured that they could not be discharged by a politically minded government, the best men for these positions could not be obtained. If there were no safeguard, I believe there would be something in his argument. But at this point I am going to suggest a safeguard, as I did previously, upon which occasion I incurred the ridicule, if it may be so termed, of the Prime Minister. I stated that it should be the duty of the House of Commons alone, and the government—not of the Senate—to discharge the trustees, if they wished to do so. I hold to that. I stated frankly before, and I repeat it at this time, that to my mind the responsibility should not be placed upon the Senate, that this House of Commons should not share the responsibility with the Senate, because only the House of Commons and government are responsible to the people of Canada. I hold to that principle very consistently, and, I suggest, very soundly. If there is danger

[Mr. Euler.]

that, from fear of partisan governments, executives or cabinets, the best men could not be secured for the positions, and if there is fear that for political reasons they might be discharged, I believe such fear might very well be allayed and the danger very definitely averted if we inserted a provision or amended this clause so that the trustees could be removed not by the executive or by the cabinet, but by a vote of the House of Commons, not including the Senate. If the men were competent, no House of Commons or no government would dare to introduce a resolution or bill into the House of Commons providing for the removal of such trustees, unless for very good cause. On such occasion the debate in the house and the fear of the criticism of an alert opposition would prevent any government from introducing such a measure, unless it were absolutely certain of its ground. The press throughout the country would take the matter up, and in my opinion, that would be ample safeguard against that which the Prime Minister seems to dread.

I shall conclude by repeating the statement with which I began, namely, that when the Prime Minister now claims or states—and he knows more than I do about constitutional law—that because of the rejection by the Senate of a resolution initiated in and passed by the House of Commons, the government must resign, he is, if stating the fact, giving the very best reason why this clause should not be passed as it now stands.

Mr. HEENAN: I desire to commend the Prime Minister at this stage for his frankness. I recall that only a few evenings ago I was in the company of two government supporters, and while discussing section 7 I said that I thought that we might go to the point where a government in power could introduce a resolution to dismiss the trustees, and that in the event of the resolution being rejected by the House of Commons and the Senate the government would have to go to the country. I do not mind saying that although the two Conservative members were friends of mine, they laughed at me. I am very glad to sit here to-day and to hear my idea substantiated by the Prime Minister.

Why are we so solicitous of gentlemen whom we are going to appoint as trustees? Why is there the discrimination between employees of the railway and trustees? Here we have an economy measure which will result in thousands of employees being thrown on the street, but the man who will be appointed to carry out these measures of economy, the chairman of the board of trustees, cannot be