

Reference was made the other day to the Montreal harbour bridge. I recall when that matter was up in the house a few years ago; it is true that we had presented to us auditors' statements, but these statements did not go far enough. They revealed that the money was spent and that there were certain receipts to show for it, but they did not reveal who the responsible parties were. Now it was intimated to us the other day that many of these people are out of the country and we could not do anything about the matter. But that is not quite good enough. It is not merely a question of trying to place blame for the past; it is a question of safeguarding the interests of the country. We are not going far enough if we just let the minister say that there has been a shocking betrayal of public trust. That statement he has not withdrawn notwithstanding the efforts of one hon. member to make him do so, and he says that a revelation of what has taken place would give the people a very unfortunate idea of how public affairs are conducted. Well, I am not anxious to arouse further disgust on the part of the public as to the conduct of public affairs, but if we are going to get things straightened out some efforts must be made to place responsibility and to guard the public treasury in the future against the raids that have been made upon it in the past. I think it is quite proper that I should ask the minister to-day, not perhaps to give a long and detailed account, but at least to indicate a little more precisely than he has done the nature of these betrayals of public trust, and to point out what can be done about the situation, before we transfer the assets to the new board. Are we to forget all about the past and let the new board start, without any effort whatever to straighten out the matters that have been in such a tangle during the last few years?

Some hon. MEMBERS: Carried.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: No; I would like some further explanation from the minister on that point.

Mr. HOWE: I understand my hon. friend wishes to know the financial position of the harbour boards. If he will look at page 1413 of Hansard of March 24 last, when I made my introductory remarks on moving second reading of this bill, he will find the statement set out in full.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I want to go further than that. Let me repeat the minister's words.

Mr. HOWE: The hon. member has repeated them twice; is that not sufficient?

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

Mr. WOODSWORTH: And I shall repeat them a third time. They are:

To me it shows the most shocking betrayal of public trust I have ever read in my life.

The minister hesitates to put the details on Hansard, because the revelation would certainly give the people a very unfortunate idea of how public affairs are conducted. In view of these statements it is only fair that the public should have some idea of what the minister had in mind. Then, are we simply going to forget all about the waste of the past, and start from a new base line? Is there any chance of recovering any of these moneys which have been squandered? I think that is a fair question.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Johnston, Lake Centre): Shall subsection 2 as amended carry?

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I cannot force the minister to reply, but I must repeat that it would seem to be in the public interest that the minister should give some further explanation as to what lies behind his statement made the other day, and as to whether or not, in the interest of the public at large, it is possible to recover any part of the moneys squandered. Those are the two questions I am asking. Of course the government will have to take the responsibility of refusing to give the information to the public.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Carried.

Mr. CAHAN: I do not wish to interrupt the hon. member, but I should like to have it clearly understood that we are dealing with section 6, and that we have held subsection 1, paragraphs (a) and (b) in abeyance for the time being until the minister has time to consider the suggested amendment.

Mr. HOWE: Quite right.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Johnston, Lake Centre): Shall subsection 2 of section 6 carry?

Amendment (Mr. Ilsley) agreed to.

Subsection as amended agreed to.

Section stands.

Sections 7 and 8 agreed to.

On section 9—Harbour headline.

Mr. CAHAN: I confess my experience in dealing with harbours has been the experience of a lawyer who from time to time has been asked to give advice. Section 9, however, is novel in my experience. I do not believe there has been any such section in any harbour legislation that I have seen.