

Mr. BENNETT: I heard the deputy say that the man was carrying on a conversation with Mr. Hawken about something else and asked for authority about removing the snow. I said I was so informed, and I said I did not believe the port manager should have to use the long distance telephone to get authority with respect to a matter such as that.

Mr. HOWE: Does my right hon. friend object to his asking the question when he was talking on the telephone?

Mr. BENNETT: No, but non constat he would not have done it anyway, but he saved two calls by doing it in one. The minister is not an inexperienced man, and I am surprised that he should endeavour to split hairs by making an observation such as that.

Mr. HOWE: I am surprised at the right hon. gentleman bringing up in the committee such a matter as snow shovelling.

Mr. BENNETT: It was to illustrate a point which the minister says is well taken, namely that the port manager should have authority to deal with such matters immediately without reference to Ottawa. I shall put a motion on the order paper asking for information as to the long distance telephone calls from Halifax since the situation came into being. As a matter of fact he did ask authority to remove the snow; that was my information and it turned out to be correct. The minister does not think I believe he rang up and asked if he could remove the snow, because probably the sun would have done it before he made up his mind. The point is simply that I believe the local manager should have reasonable authority, and I use this as an illustration.

Mr. HOWE: How much authority?

Mr. BENNETT: The question of the fixing of an arbitrary line where the authority of the port manager begins and ends is the reason we are pressing now for the civil service commission to exercise its authority to prevent hiring and firing, to use the language of the minister, with respect to all the appointments. It is idle to say that the men who keep the books and accounts should be subjected to the haunting spectre of being removed from their job at the instance of some politician or member of the House of Commons. It is idle to say that a man who is a policeman in Halifax shall be dismissed because a member of parliament says: "I want that job for someone else," and gives his name. That is the position that I say is wrong; that is what we are endeavouring to overcome. I certainly would not suggest that the port manager should be

[Mr. Howe.]

able to commit the port of Vancouver to a large capital expenditure, or that the port manager at Saint John should be able to enter into a contract for the construction of a new dock, nor yet that it should be necessary that men who are engaged from day to day or from hour to hour in the port should be permanently appointed. But when it comes to men employed in the keeping of the accounts and records, men who have to do with the technical administration of the port, there should be a certain permanency in their positions; for continuity of service makes for efficiency of administration. The earnest desire that industrial companies have to prevent change of employees finds sound application here. It seems to me that in all positions that involve continuity of service for longer than six months or a year or two years there should be some security. Mark you, the very definition added as to the power of the board is one reason which makes it essential that we assert this position. We say the board is a corporation capable of being sued and to sue, and that it is an agent of His Majesty the King. During the last fifteen or twenty years in Canada we have generally propounded the position that those who are employed by the crown in the class of service to which I refer shall have permanency and security of employment. It is only that; and because we make suggestions to the minister he must not assume that in any sense we are desirous of embarrassing him in the passing of his bill. Rather we desire to help him, and the suggestions we make are not of a political character. Only a few days ago his colleague sitting beside him placed a measure before the house. We read it and suggested the addition or deletion of a word here or another word there. He leaves the chamber thinking that perhaps the suggestions would improve the bill. We do not ask him to do it at our instance. His colleague then moves the suggested amendment.

We have a duty to discharge in this chamber. I have one for which I am paid, and I am bound to give the best I have to the country which pays me. Part of my duty is to make suggestions as to how I believe we can best attain an end. My suggestions may not be acted upon. I merely make them for what they are worth, and in no capricious or political spirit, but with the hope that they may be accepted for the purpose of improving legislation. Sometimes they are accepted by the government, and sometimes they are not. We urge them as strongly as possible, but the minister must not say he is almost prepared