

*National Harbours Board*

dismissed from the staff of the Vancouver harbour commission during the period from August 7, 1930, to October 23, 1935.

Now, ten years hence, unless we deal with this matter in the proper way and put it under the civil service commission, we shall have similar questions to this on the order paper, and for similar reasons. The minister asked the hon. member who is acting leader of the opposition to-day (Sir George Perley) if he would make appointments through the civil service commission or a similar organization if he were dealing with his own business. But government business is not the same as private business, as has been well pointed out. I suggest to the minister that if he wants to get the credit which is undoubtedly coming to him for introducing this legislation, he go the whole distance and have the appointments under the civil service commission, so that we may get away from the evils of patronage in this matter.

Mr. ST-PERE: All the appointments?

Mr. MacINNIS: Something can be done. There may be minor appointments that would not come under the civil service commission, but I am convinced that most appointments could be made by the commission just as well as by the board which is going to be appointed.

Mr. ST-PERE: Does the hon. member say that the civil service commission is competent to appoint the manager of a car repair plant in Montreal? What competency have they to appoint a master mechanic? The hon. member talks about patronage; in 1930 my opponent was the leader of a committee which looked after the dismissal of Liberals. These are facts. My hon. friend from Vancouver East (Mr. MacInnis) is a motorman. He was appointed there because the manager knew what he could do. Would he tell me that specialists administering a harbour board are not more competent to employ men belonging to special trades than is the civil service commission? The hon. member from his place in the house tries to convince the people of Canada that the civil service commission should have the first word in appointing plumbers, mechanics, and men all belonging to working classes. I say that this is impracticable; it is nonsense. The civil service commission is not omniscient.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: It seems to me that the hon. member for Hochelaga (Mr. St-Père) is strengthening the argument we are trying to make regarding this matter. I say again, I am not trying to assess the blame. My hon. friend from Hochelaga blames the Conservatives for doing certain things when

[Mr. MacInnis.]

they came into office; I could reply and blame the Liberals, but is a tu quoque argument of any use in a matter of this kind? This has been an evil and trouble all through the years. I told my hon. friend, the minister, before that personally I am very glad he has brought in this legislation; I think something was required to improve the administration of the ports, but I submit that he should give further consideration to this point. This government is not going to be in power forever; some day there will be another government. Is he going to perpetuate the idea of having the employees of this board change when there is a change of government? I would take exactly the same stand if the argument were the other way; I do not believe in the principle. If you are going to have a good administration of the harbours you have to build up a competent staff, some of whom, at any rate, will have a certain degree of permanency. Perhaps it cannot be managed to have all the staff of the harbour board appointed by the civil service commission; sometimes I think there are some positions being filled by the commission to-day that would be better not dealt with by the commission. I have known cases like that. I referred a little while ago to the canal in the constituency of Argenteuil; I think some other authority might be more competent to appoint lock men than the civil service commission. We took the small post offices away from the civil service commission some years ago, very wisely I think. The member of parliament is better able to suggest the name of a post-master for a small post office in his constituency than any one else. I am not suggesting that everyone employed by the harbour board should be appointed by the civil service commission, but I say to the minister, who is evidently endeavouring to improve the administration of these harbours, that some way ought to be found to give permanency to at any rate a large part of the employees of the board, so that when there is a change of government they will stay in their positions. I speak my personal views entirely; I am not in favour of giving the commission authority over everyone appointed, but I am sure that on the whole the civil service commission have improved the service and made civil servants feel that they are more permanent, and so have drawn to the service a better class of men and women, who are willing to make it their permanent calling in life. Surely some way can be found to give to at least the greater part of the employees of this board that sense of permanency, so that