

*Tariff Board*

said, because when the matter was under consideration previously hon. members on this side discussed it fully, and the reasons then given still obtain.

The tenure of office for which provision is made in this bill is very long as compared with that of similar bodies in other countries. I wish to bring to the attention of hon. members of the committee what I brought to the attention of the house, namely, that in 1912 Sir Thomas White introduced a bill to create a tariff commission, in connection with which the tenure of office was set at five years. To that bill the Senate proposed an amendment, which was accepted by Sir Thomas White, to the effect that members of the board should hold office during pleasure. Section 4 of the present bill, which states the powers of the board, provides that the board shall act "under the direction of the minister" and shall "report to the minister." I submit that a board which has not the confidence of the administration of the day is not in a position to do effective work when it is under the direction of the Minister of Finance and must report to that minister. The leader of the opposition touched the point as to whether or not it would be possible to get competent men to accept positions on the board for a shorter tenure of office, and I submit the reasons he gave for coming to the conclusion that it would be possible to get competent men to serve on the board, even with a shorter tenure of office, were convincing. I must oppose, for the reasons I gave in the house, the section of the bill which places tenure of office at ten years.

Mr. HANBURY: Following the remarks of the hon. member for Hants-Kings (Mr. Ilsley) I purpose to move an amendment to the clause in the bill dealing with the tenure of office of the members of the board. In the first place I am not altogether pleased with a commission of this nature. To me it savours of the development of bureaucracy, something from which we should get farther away rather than encourage. I do not approve the practice of handing all our functions over to commissions and committees; I think the government should take more responsibility. If the government wishes to appoint a committee of civil servants to find facts on which policies may be based, that is something for the government to decide. To shelve its responsibilities and put its head behind a commission, however, is something with which I cannot agree. It is evidence of a lack of courage and a desire to pass the buck. It has been intimated, and I think quite fairly, that if the Prime Minister and the government insist upon fixing the life of

[Mr. Ilsley.]

this commission at ten years with provision for pension for the balance of their years, they will not be continued in office when the present government is defeated, as it must be in time. With that opinion I fully agree. The Prime Minister must accept the position that he has been served notice by the Liberal party that they do not accept his commissioners, and under these circumstances the commissioners, in taking office, must realize that they will remain at the pleasure of the Liberal government when it comes into power. The Liberal government will not consider itself bound by the legislation the Prime Minister is endeavouring to place on the statute books at the present time.

The suggestion has been made that the reason why these gentlemen should be engaged for a period of ten years is that competent men who are thoroughly qualified to fill the position must have a certainty of tenure, followed by a life pension. My criticism is that this bill does not contemplate appointing the members for their ability to analyze; they are not being engaged to exercise their judgment. They will act as accountants and investigators, bringing down the facts for the guidance of the Prime Minister. For that reason I do not think the type of commission suggested in this legislation, composed of what you might call super-qualified men, is at all necessary. A commission composed of men already in the civil service would be quite capable of fulfilling such duties. However, assuming that the highest type of man is required, it is not necessary to inflict this commission upon the Liberal party in order to procure him. Let the Prime Minister pay a salary sufficient to get the man he wants, rather than give him a fixed tenure of office. Let the Prime Minister pay his price; we will be satisfied, but we do not want him to inflict this commission on the Liberal administration when the government changes. I ask the Prime Minister not to attempt to place the ghost of the conservative party in the cupboard of the Liberal party when the government changes. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Hants-Kings that section 3 be amended by striking out subsections 3, 4 and 5 thereof and substituting therefor the following:

(3) Each member shall hold office during pleasure.

Mr. BENNETT: We have not come to consider section 4 as yet. But the hon. member for Hants-King made a suggestion with regard to the opening words, which are:

In respect of goods produced in or imported into Canada the board shall, under the direction of the minister—