

Mr. FINN: I accept the statement of my hon. friend the ex-secretary of state, but unfortunately he sits in opposition and is not responsible, and I would like to hear from the Minister of Marine who, sitting on this side of the house as a member of the government, is responsible.

Mr. HOWE: I thought I gave that before, but I may say that my hon. friend opposite is quite correct, in that this is exactly the description of Halifax harbour that has been in the statutes from the earliest times. It is taken word for word from the Harbour Commission Act of 1927.

Mr. ISNOR: Not quite. I hold in my hand a copy of the 1927 act.

Mr. FINN: I think the gentleman who drafted this particular section should have provided us with a plan or a little chart to show the location of this point north 56 degrees east and distant 3,500 feet south-easterly from Pleasant point. This is the latest statute, and as such will govern, and it seems to me that the description as set out here does not include Dartmouth but takes a point in the centre of the harbour and includes Bedford basin, the Northwest arm and northwesterly from this point, which means the Halifax side; and this could be very well cleared up by saying that it also includes the shore of Dartmouth, Woodside and Imperoil; then there would be no mistake.

Mr. HOWE: May I suggest that at the rate we are going we shall be at the schedule about two weeks from next Thursday. In the meantime perhaps the hon. gentleman could satisfy himself that the description is correct, and if any amendment is necessary he could bring it to our attention when the schedule comes up for approval. Is that satisfactory?

Mr. FINN: Yes. I do not doubt the hon. minister for a moment, but I should like to see a captain lay down the course the same as if he were taking a ship out of the harbour. I am perfectly satisfied with the statement of the minister; I am sure he intends what he says, but I would like it put in the statute if it is not there.

Mr. HOWE: I will undertake that if my hon. friend will check that up, before this bill is out of the committee stage he will have opportunity to suggest an amendment, if necessary.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: Would the minister be willing that his colleague should move that this clause be amended by striking out the last three lines, if my hon. friend does not think them important?

Mr. HOWE: It becomes a matter of opinion, and I think the opinion of the government should have some weight. We think it would be better to leave the clause as it is. The matter is not one of vital importance.

Mr. CAHAN: Then I move:

That all the words after "this act" in the seventh line of subsection 2 of section 6 be struck out.

In other words, that the last three lines of subsection 2 of section 6 be struck out.

Mr. RINFRET: Substituting what?

Mr. CAHAN: Nothing.

Amendment (Mr. Cahan) negatived.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Before we pass from this section I should like to have from the minister a fuller explanation of what is involved in taking over these works. The minister made a statement, to which reference was incidentally made yesterday. The statement was as follows; I quoted it yesterday:

To me it shows the most shocking betrayal of public trust I have ever read in my life. I feel in one way that it should be put on Hansard so that the people of this country might learn something about harbour commissions; on the other hand I dislike to do this because it would certainly give the people a very unfortunate idea of how public affairs are conducted.

Now, to a certain extent I think I agree with the leader of the opposition in saying that the minister has said either too much or too little. It is not a matter of making charges of graft or incompetence against any individual who has been on any of these harbour boards. I would be the last one to seek to drag a discussion of that kind on to the floor of this chamber; this house is not suited to be transformed into a court. On the other hand I would say that huge sums of public money have been expended on these harbours in the past, and evidently there have been incompetence and waste. I do not know that we can undo the past; at the same time, now that these properties are to be transferred to another board, I think the public have a right to know the liabilities of these various boards. We do not know that. I think the public have a right to know who is responsible for the huge deficits that have been piled up, which, I understand, have involved the government in paying interest at times, and have led to increased borrowings, while in other cases the boards have not been able to pay the interest due to the government. I think the public have a right to know that kind of thing. There may be a possibility of recovery of some of the moneys that have been misspent in the past.