

The question of how much authority the port manager should have is rather difficult. We are trying to set up a new order with reasonable permanence. The authority the port manager should have is something to be decided. Our first view was that he should have none, that he should not be able to hire or to dismiss men. He should be able to suspend men for cause, and notice should be given to the central board. The purpose is obvious; it is to stop the sort of thing my right hon. friend refers to. My right hon. friend criticized us for a situation that he assumed arose in Saint John, which if it had arisen would have been very wrong—

Mr. BENNETT: Montreal.

Mr. HOWE: In Montreal, rather, and there was criticism from other sources. We therefore relaxed the regulations in some cases. A case may have occurred in Halifax. As a matter of fact we did in Halifax and Vancouver give authority to the port managers to employ men on hourly wages. They have free authority in that regard, and the situation my right hon. friend spoke of might have arisen; I do not know whether it did or not. In any event, as I say, we have not the machinery set up, and until this bill is enacted and we get our board organized, we have very little chance of instituting a system that will work. We feel that the main consideration is not to interfere with the business of the ports; that has been the paramount consideration—we must keep the wheels operating. As to permanence, no one wishes permanence more than I do. Sir Alexander Gibb made a thorough study of the matter, and his opinion deserves weight; he is an excellent man and made an excellent report. He stated that the board—

—should have wide discretionary powers in the matter of rates, salaries, terms of service, the settling and administration of contracts, the engagement of special technical assistance, the sanctioning of emergency capital expenditure, and the control generally of all construction and port operations.

I take the same view. It is a matter that has been under study for a long time, and that is what we hope to work out. We are working towards greater permanence of employment. I believe if the thing is allowed to work out as recommended by Sir Alexander Gibb we shall, over a period of years attain the certainty of service that they have in the Canadian National Railways and other well managed corporations. It is hardly fair to criticize us too severely if at the moment the wheels are not clicking just as they should. We are trying to change from one system to another; as long as we have no

permanent legislation we are unable to make a permanent set-up. But I can assure the committee that if my intentions had not been along the lines that the other side are advocating I would not have brought this bill to the point it has now reached. I must say I am getting a bit fed up with it and my resistance is getting at a rather low ebb.

Mr. BENNETT: The last observation of the minister indicates that he has not been long experienced in the position he occupies, because he will learn by and by that he will get very weary of many things he may have to do. Patience is a virtue that far transcends all others in dealing with matters of this kind. He cannot deal with this as he would with a plan or design in a drafting room; one has to remember that there are 245 members of this house and they all have a right to express their views if they so desire.

I believe the hon. gentleman really has a desire to accomplish the purpose he has indicated. It was because we felt as we did about it that we asked Sir Alexander Gibb to come and make a report, and it is because we believe that report is a sound one that we are here to-day. When I spoke the other evening about local authority I was referring to the inadvisability of bureaucracy or centralized authority with respect to trifling matters. The minister now says he agrees with my view that the question of removing snow should not have to be submitted to Ottawa.

Mr. HOWE: It never was.

Mr. BENNETT: I said I was so informed.

Mr. HOWE: You said "by people in authority," and I questioned all the people in authority and all of them assure me that it was not. The decision was exactly the opposite.

Mr. BENNETT: Did they telephone to Ottawa for the purpose of receiving authority for removing snow? Is that true or not? They telephoned to Mr. Hawken, if you must know about it.

Mr. HOWE: Yes, that is true.

Mr. BENNETT: Well, that is my point. Why deny that there is any truth in it, when I know and could give the particulars?

Mr. HOWE: He did not call up for that; he simply asked in the conversation: "Is it all right to take on some men?"

Mr. BENNETT: The minister has a trained mind; surely he does not for a single moment—

Mr. HOWE: I am taking what the officers in charge said.