

*National Harbours Board*

That subsection (1) of section 3 be amended by striking out all the words after the word "minister" in line 22 on page 1 down to the end of the said subsection, and substituting therefor the following:—

"three national harbour boards, known as

(a) The Atlantic harbours board,

(b) The St. Lawrence harbours board, and

(c) The Pacific harbour board,

each consisting of three members, namely a chairman, a vice-chairman, and a third member who shall be appointed by the governor in council and who shall hold office during pleasure."

I regret in one sense to have to present this amendment against a bill of the government, but as I said on second reading, it is the general consensus of opinion in Quebec that we should have a board for the St. Lawrence river. I have received from the electors of Montreal at large, without any solicitation, over 315 letters stating that we should oppose this principle. There is no reason why the government cannot control the finances of all these three commissions just as well as they would control the finances of only one commission.

Mr. HOWE: I feel that the hon. member who proposed this amendment has not given the situation very careful study. For example I can imagine the situation if we had a harbour board for the ports of Halifax and Saint John; we could easily get one commissioner from Halifax and one from Saint John, but I am not sure that Halifax would give the third member to Saint John, and I am equally doubtful whether Saint John would give the third member to Halifax, so there would be some practical difficulty there. Then we come to the St. Lawrence where we have four harbours, and only three commissioners to be appointed. I am not sure that Montreal would be satisfied to be in the minority on that commission, and I doubt whether Quebec would be, but I am sure that Chicoutimi would not agree to have her affairs run by harbour commissioners from Montreal and Quebec.

Mr. BENNETT: To say nothing of Sorel.

Mr. HOWE: Sorel might object as well, and Three Rivers I am sure would demand pretty fair representation. It might work well at Vancouver. However I do not know that we need to go into this more deeply. I have not spoken at length on the subject of harbours, but I have before me a volume which I compiled with some little trouble, going back over five years of harbour commissions of various ports. 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

[Mr. E. Bertrand.]

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.

However we are out to make progress, and the objections that apply to seven harbour commissions would apply also and in equal measure to three. Without pursuing the matter further I must ask that this amendment be not accepted.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): I must rise to a point of order. The hon. gentleman who proposed the amendment moved for three different harbour boards. Subsection 5 on page 2 provides that:

Each member shall be paid such sum for his services as the governor in council may from time to time determine.

Obviously it is a matter that affects the revenues of the crown.

Mr. VIEN: On the point of order, I do not believe that the amendment is in conflict with the principle of the bill. The bill proposes to reduce seven commissions to one; the amendment tends to reduce the seven commissions to three. Therefore the underlying principle of the bill is not destroyed but only modified, and the amendment is not at variance therewith.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): That is not the point of order at all. May I repeat it? The point of order is that the bill as such provides for three harbour commissioners, and the amendment provides for three different harbour boards. If hon. members would read subsection 5 of section 3 of the bill they would find that each member is to be paid. I suggest, therefore, that by a private member's amendment we are making provision for a payment of six more commissioners, and thereby we interfere with the duties of the crown.

Mr. VIEN: The point of order is not well taken. At the present time there are seven harbour commissions and the bill proposes to reduce the number to one. The amendment does not propose to increase the expenditure of money, but simply tends to reduce the cut which the bill proposes to make in the present expenditure of money. The amendment does not involve an expenditure of money, but simply reduces the cut indicated in the bill, by maintaining three commissions instead of one only, as in the bill. You cannot find in the amendment a proposal to increase the present expenditure of money. The amendment simply reduces the cut effected by the bill. I should like to have a ruling, Mr. Chairman.