

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

ago, a decision was made to turn over these publicly-owned deep sea piers, which were making a profit, to private enterprise. They were leased out to private enterprise, which seems very strange. Anyone looking back at the history of Vancouver harbour will recall that there was a time when private enterprise was not the least bit interested in the piers and wharves. During the years of small losses, private enterprise again was not the least bit interested in them. But when the picture changed and it became known that over the years the publicly-owned deep sea piers in Vancouver harbour had been consistently and continuously showing a good profit, private enterprise said, "What in the name of blazes is the government doing in the pier and wharf business? Let us have it." It appears that the government has acquiesced in this approach.

I understand that Lapointe Pier, Ballantyne Pier and Centennial Piers 1, 2 and 3 in Vancouver harbour have been leased to private enterprise. I think we are entitled to know why there is a change in policy and why a profit making, publicly-owned operation has been turned over to private enterprise. What is the basis of the leasing? Will the government make a profit from the leasing which will give it a return similar to the profit it has been making since 1947 on the operation of the piers in Vancouver harbour?

I point out that in the past few years the National Harbours Board has given a grant to the city of Vancouver in lieu of taxes. What is the situation so far as Vancouver City Council is concerned? Under this leasing arrangement is it to obtain taxes, or a grant in lieu of taxes? Who will pay it—those who have the leases, or the Harbours Board? When there is need for new equipment and cranes, who will supply them—will it be the Harbours Board or some other agency? If it will be the Harbours Board, on what rental basis? Will the rental provide a commensurate return? Who will pay the city wharfage rates, the Harbours Board at Vancouver or the lessee?

A great many questions could be asked about the subject and I feel that a great deal of information is required. Realizing that the hon. member who speaks on behalf of the minister will not be able to give us a complete answer in the time allotted to him in the late show, I nevertheless wish to know why there has been this change in policy, why this profit-making public enterprise has been handed over to private enterprise. Let

[Mr. Winch.]

us have some idea of the basis of the leases. Undoubtedly he will not have enough time to complete his remarks, but may I ask the hon. member if he will ask the Minister of Transport to file in this House copies of the leases in question so that we may have a clear understanding of their terms and will know, through analysing them, whether through this method of leasing will bring as great a return to the taxpayers of this country as was the case when the piers were operated under public ownership for the benefit of the federal treasury.

Mr. Gérard Loiselle (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, in addition to the original question the hon. member has asked about 10 or 15 questions about Vancouver harbour which I am afraid I am not ready to answer. In so many words he asked the minister to make a statement on motions about Vancouver harbour and to say if the government has looked into the matter of leasing in Vancouver harbour. I have in my hand a prepared answer, but it relates to the hon. member's original question.

I shall bring the hon. member's supplementary questions to the attention of the department and try to obtain the information he seeks. May I at this time, however, give the hon. member the information in my possession on the subject of leasing. The National Harbours Board advises that it has no intention at the present time of changing the system of leasing Lapointe, Ballantyne and Centennial Piers 1, 2 and 3 in Vancouver harbour. These piers are operated under a five-year agreement which commenced October, 1968. Before this new system was introduced, the Board had employed a procedure whereby the operation of the Board's deep sea piers was carried out by a stevedoring contractor under Board direction.

For some years past the National Harbours Board has been subject to criticism on the grounds that as a government agency it was engaging in unfair competition with the private sector. After extensive study of pier operating systems, the Board decided that proposals should be invited for the operation of pier facilities in Vancouver. The general purpose of the new scheme was to have the facilities operated by private enterprise and to ensure a healthy competitive environment within the harbour while at the same time removing the possibility of any one operator securing a monopolistic position.

Prospective bidders were advised that it was essential that all vessels entering the port