

posts of idleness in the service: "And we shall feed like oxen at a stall, the better cherish'd, still the nearer death."

My own opinion now is, as respects this clause and the others which I have stated we feel like insisting on, that perhaps we could get the most out of them by consideration in committee. I do not want to delay the House at all. On the contrary, I think we should probably reach an agreement more expeditiously if we referred the message to the same committee. The Minister should be there if required, so we could hear what it is possible to say with regard to the effect of the amendments made. I would not ask this if I did not think they were very important. I think we should adopt the course of affording all the safeguards possible, and I believe this could be done better and more quickly in committee.

Hon. Mr. BALLANTYNE: As I spoke at considerable length on the second reading of this Bill, I shall delay this honourable House for only a few moments. Permit me to say at the outset that I am very much disappointed, indeed, at the attitude the Minister has taken in regard to the very sensible amendments which this House has made to the Harbours Board Bill. I think honourable members will believe me when I say that I have not in mind any political idea, nor had I any when I suggested the amendments on the second reading of the Bill. I was prompted by the fact that during my six years' experience as commissioner of the port of Montreal—five under the Hon. Mr. Brodeur and one under the Hon. Mr. Hazen—we were entirely free from politics. As to the efficiency and economy of the management of the port during that period I am quite willing to take the judgment of the Shipping Federation and the Board of Trade. The records will speak for themselves. When I became Minister I kept in touch with all the harbour boards there were at that time. I think there were only two, Montreal and Quebec. Vancouver came in later. I did not interfere with them at all, and I challenge any man in this House or outside of it to produce a single communication from me, as Minister, suggesting that anything should be done from a political point of view.

Here we have before us again this most important Bill dealing with our national harbours—our exports and our imports. It would be a matter of great regret to me to see those ports bedevilled with politics. As I said on a previous occasion, if I now had the responsibility of the Minister of Marine I would welcome the inclusion of the permanent staff and the seasonal staff under the Civil

Service Commission, leaving to the port manager the appointment of the labourers who come and go; and I would strongly favour the opening of tenders in public. I would advocate that for my own preservation, my own peace of mind.

Let me visualize once more the position the port managers are going to be in. Most of their time will be taken up by people seeking positions. What a fine thing it would be for a port manager to be able to say to those people: "I deal only with the labouring men, the seasonal employees; the permanent staff is under the Civil Service Commission." The same answer could be made by the central board, and also by the Minister. When I was considering and offering these amendments my one and only purpose was to ease the terrific pressure that would be brought to bear, to an even greater degree because of the depression, by the people to whom I have just referred. The present Minister apparently holds a contrary view.

I regret to say that information which has already reached me is very disturbing. While the permanent staffs remain—they have to remain for some time at least, because these great ports could not be operated by any but expert men who have been there for a great number of years—the seasonal staffs have been completely wiped out. The honourable senator from La Salle (Hon. Mr. Moraud) told this House a few days ago that in his city, Quebec, there is a patronage committee and the dismissal of port employees is now in the hands, not of the port management, the board, or the Minister, but of that patronage committee. A similar condition will prevail in the port of Montreal and all the other ports if the Minister and the Government of the day are satisfied to be dictated to by a patronage committee in each of those ports. There is a great responsibility resting upon the Minister and upon the Government. I have done my full duty as a member of this House in pointing out the difficulties we had to contend with in years gone by. I have shown what great efficiency the harbour commission of Montreal was able to develop by being free from patronage, and I have done all I could to impress upon this House, the Minister and the Government the desirability of emulating the practice followed by former ministers whom I have mentioned, and of striving to the utmost to keep these great national enterprises free from political patronage. We have been cursed with patronage, regardless of which party has been in power, Conservative or Liberal, and now apparently the intention is to carry it on wholesale from one end of the country to the other. I deeply regret this.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN.