

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, August 2, 1963

The house met at 11 a.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. CHEVRIER—STATEMENT RESPECTING OPINION GIVEN ON SURCHARGE ORDER

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. Last night, in answer to a question by the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings, I said there was neither a written nor an oral opinion given on the surcharge order. In so far as the written opinion is concerned, there can be no doubt; I searched and found none.

Regarding the oral opinion, in reviewing the matter when I returned to my office last evening I recollected having been advised that the matter had been discussed orally at the time. I am sorry if I unwittingly misled the house. At all events, I suggest that for the purpose of the present bill the question of whether or not there was an oral opinion, not to mention a written opinion, given to the former government is irrelevant. In my capacity as Minister of Justice and legal adviser to the crown under the Department of Justice Act, it is my opinion that the surcharge order was not validly made, and I have so advised the government. In any case, should there be only a doubt regarding this important matter it is in the public interest that such doubt be removed, and that is what the bill intends to do.

DRUGS AND PESTICIDES

CONCURRENCE IN FIRST REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Mr. H. C. Harley (Halton) presented the first report of the special committee on food and drugs, and moved that the report be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

TRANSPORT

WELLAND CANAL—ANNOUNCEMENT OF DECISION TO TWIN LOCKS

Hon. G. J. McIlraith (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement to make which I think should be of interest to the house. The government has decided to proceed with the full twinning of the locks of the Welland canal, construction to commence this winter.

This project is considered essential to eliminate congestion which, traffic estimates indicate, would become acute by 1966 if the present single lock system were continued, and to provide for traffic growth. During the 1961 navigation season of 260 days, an average of four vessels were waiting on each of 162 days. This situation worsened in 1962, when on each of 194 days an average of seven vessels were waiting for transit. The same trend has continued to date in the 1963 season.

The locks to be twinned are Nos. 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8. With this expansion it is estimated that the physical capacity of the canal will be increased by 60 per cent.

It is estimated that the twinning project will cost \$180 million. A bill will be introduced in this house to amend section 13 of the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act, increasing the authority's borrowing power to provide the means for securing the funds.

The substantial expenditures involved in the twinning project make it necessary to give serious consideration to the matter of removing the suspension of tolls which became effective July 18, 1962.

The time schedule for completing the twinning construction and associated works involves a period of slightly less than five years. This time schedule is designed to ensure maximum safety during construction, avoidance of excessive costs and minimum interruption of navigation and vehicular traffic. It is estimated that the construction program over four full years, including five winters, will require a labour force ranging from 4,000 to 6,000 men, with reasonably uniform year round employment. In preparation for this development the seaway authority proceeded in 1960 with the engineering plans necessary, and in 1962 expropriated 320 acres of land required for twinning. The construction program for twinning will be commenced this year on work essential to the whole project, which at the same time will increase the usefulness of existing facilities.

The major construction work of the new locks, 1, 2, 3 and 7, is planned to commence in the fall of 1964, with scheduled completion in 1968. At that time construction of the twin lock No. 8 at Port Colborne, not regarded as a part of the major program, will be undertaken.

With the twinning of the Welland canal, consideration will have to be given to the