

Supply—Transport

would triple the volume of traffic through the canal system of the river, i.e. would increase it from 10 to 30 million tons. Consequently, if ports below Montreal are able to handle part of that traffic, they are bound to benefit from this increase. However, in order to benefit by this improvement, a port such as that of Three Rivers must be made a transfer point. At the moment, if the national harbours board persist in treating the port of Three Rivers as they have done since they took charge of it, I doubt very much that our area will derive the advantages to which it is entitled.

At the present time, for instance, there is a lot of wheat being shipped. It is brought down to us from the lakes in very small ships and then loaded on vessels for overseas. Unfortunately, when the deep waterway is finished wheat from below Montreal will be handled by big lakers and Three Rivers does not, as yet, possess the necessary equipment to ensure harbour facilities to those large ships.

The people of Three Rivers do not want to make a show of jingoism, and, like the other towns of this country, they are glad to think that the St. Lawrence seaway project will vastly improve the economic position of all great lakes cities.

Most of the harbours on the great lakes expect a lot of business to come their way. Well, as Canadians, not only do we see nothing wrong with that, but we are glad to see this country of ours develop from one end to the other. However, we do hope that the harbours on the great lakes will not fall into the hands of the national harbours board, or at least that they will not get the treatment the Three Rivers harbour is getting at the present time from the board.

It seems to me that the coming of the deep waterway provides the national harbours board with a great opportunity as well as a justification to carry out needed improvements in the Three Rivers harbour. It surely could not be accused of wasting money if it made these vital improvements, for the Three Rivers harbour is a natural harbour which needs no maintenance work as far as dredging is concerned, as is the case with the Quebec and Montreal harbours. It is a deep-water harbour. As a matter of fact, it is from 30 to 65 feet deep. Besides there is practically no tide and the current is not very strong. Opposite Three Rivers the St. Lawrence is about a mile wide. Therefore, even the largest ocean-going ships which sail up and down the St.

Lawrence river can easily move around and even turn about, which makes for extremely easy navigation. Finally, Three Rivers harbour is one of the few ports in our country where ships do not have to be towed when mooring at the wharf or sailing out. This is a very important feature for shipping companies, and one that can mean a substantial saving for them.

As I just said, capital expenditures to improve the facilities of the Three Rivers harbour would surely not be a waste of money. The people of Three Rivers are ready to do their share in developing their harbour. We are now putting a final touch on legislation which will make it possible to put up a bridge between Three Rivers and Nicolet county. The building costs of this bridge, which will run to \$12,500,000, will be carried by private enterprise, and there is no doubt that once the bridge is built, the industry of Three Rivers and the whole district will be able to use the harbour facilities of that town if they are available.

It is therefore a pity to find that the national harbours board is the only one not doing its share. This is all the more surprising since the harbour of Three Rivers is the only Atlantic port under the jurisdiction of the board, which has brought it a profit in the past few years.

Mr. Chairman, may I quote figures that I gathered in the brief submitted by the city of Three Rivers last summer to the board of inquiry on coastal shipping in Canada. I quote:

When the national harbours board took over in 1936, the accounting value of capital assets amounted to \$7,547,100 and accrued surplus to \$2,913,113.

Between 1936 and 1953 (table 1), the national harbours board derived from the harbour of Three Rivers an operating revenue of \$4,570,086.86 and spent on administration and maintenance \$730,181.45, leaving an operating profit of \$3,839,905.41.

This is an enormous sum when compared with what the national harbours board is getting from other Atlantic ports.

In 1947, the surplus account is regularized and there is an increase in the books of \$1,270,150.06 without the capital assets account being affected.

In 1952, the surplus account is again regularized through a decrease of \$2,521,283.54, as well as the value of capital assets, which decreases from \$7,897,797.03 to \$5,450,921.99.

I again quote the brief of the city of Three Rivers.

An analysis of the financial statements published by the national harbours board shows that Three Rivers harbour alone—