

St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act

point out to him that the fault, if it lies anywhere, does not lie so much in this direction as it does in the other direction because he failed to ascertain what the facts were before he made his speech.

I say to you, Mr. Chairman, that if the responsibility lies entirely with the former minister of transport we must consider the responsibility of the present Minister of Transport. The responsibility of the present minister with reference to the contracts which have been given since is equal to that of the former minister of transport.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Oh, nonsense.

Mr. Chevrier: I say that because there can be no doubt that if an error of this kind existed surely it should have been discovered when the present administration came into office. Surely some responsibility must be laid at the doorstep of the other officers of the government. I am not directing my attack at the Minister of Transport alone. There are other officers who advise the Minister of Transport and he in his everyday responsibility must accept that advice. Otherwise, how could he get along or administer the affairs of a department? That is exactly what happened in this case.

Then it was said by the hon. member for Carleton "Oh, so far as we were concerned there was no option on the part of the government other than to proceed and excavate to the summit level." In so far as the contracts awarded prior to the present government coming into office were concerned surely the moment this error was discovered the government should have investigated, gone to the source and made sure that an error such as has been complained of had been corrected. And later when the government gave a number of contracts, did the government investigate to ascertain what the present position was? Of course not. Members of the government discovered it when they investigated last night on the occasion when they decided to make speeches on this matter.

The hon. member for Carleton then went on to say if the hon. gentleman—referring to the hon. member for Laurier—had come to the house at the time as he should have and made a frank confession of the errors of which he was guilty then the present government would not be faced with the problem that confronts it today. Let me tell him at once that I could not have come before the house at that time because I was not then a member of the house. At that time I was a member of the St. Lawrence seaway authority.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): But you were when you complained of this.

[Mr. Chevrier.]

Mr. Chevrier: I did take certain steps, however. Following the responsibilities that were charged to the St. Lawrence seaway authority under the various pieces of legislation that obtained, I tabled the information which the house has had over a period of four years during which time it has had an opportunity to consider and discuss.

My hon. friend said that if I had done that and confessed my errors the government would not have been faced with the problems confronting it today. In reply I say this: You have been faced with those problems for two years now, what have you done about them? Have you investigated? Have you attempted to do anything about them? At any time did you rise in your place and bring these matters to the attention of parliament? No, but you and others have risen in your places today and charged, not the St. Lawrence seaway authority or the government or the Minister of Transport but the poor hon. member for Laurier—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chevrier: —and if you think he is going to sit here and take it you are badly mistaken.

The Chairman: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. gentleman but I am obliged to advise him that his time has expired.

Mr. Chevrier: Would the committee give me an opportunity of continuing?

Some hon. Members: Go ahead.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Let us give the hon. gentleman enough rope.

The Chairman: Does the committee give unanimous consent to the hon. member for Laurier to continue his remarks?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Chevrier: I thank the committee for this courtesy. I have finished with the hon. member for Carleton.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Mr. Chairman, may I interrupt to say that the hon. gentleman may think that is true but I am afraid he is sadly mistaken.

Mr. Chevrier: I should like to deal now with that gem of prose which was uttered in this chamber this afternoon by the hon. member for Stormont. I enjoyed part of his speech but I cannot say I enjoyed other parts and if the committee will allow me to do so I should like to say how illogical and inconsequential his speech was. He accused me of having been responsible for the assassination of the city of Cornwall and for having betrayed that city. Mr. Chairman, I have been in parliament for