

THE ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY

Statement by Mr. Lionel Chevrier, Minister of Transport, made in the House of Commons on December 4, 1951.

I rise to propose a resolution dealing with a subject of great importance to the economy of Canada, the development of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway. This subject has been agitating public opinion for over a century.

It has been the subject of negotiation between Canada and the United States for over half a century. These negotiations culminated in the Treaty of Washington of 1932, defeated in the United States Senate, and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Development Basin Agreement of 1941, which after ten years still awaits Congressional approval.

The object of this resolution is to establish an authority for the purpose of constructing a deep waterway between the port of Montreal and Lake Erie. The works necessary for the waterway may complement other works on the United States side of the border, or they may provide a waterway wholly within Canada. It is intended further that the authority should maintain and operate the completed Canadian works of this waterway.

I should say at once that another resolution will follow, seeking approval of an agreement with the Province of Ontario with respect to the power to be developed in the International Section of the St. Lawrence River in connection with the Seaway.

In the first place, I need hardly tell a forum such as this, composed of Members from all parts of Canada, what an important part water transportation has played in the development of our country. In fact, for many years it was the only method of conveyance and it played a determining part in the establishment and the location of many of our important cities.

Canal Developments

Without going into details, let me refer briefly to the canal developments in our country which divide themselves under three heads:

1. A series of canals providing a 9-foot channel from Montreal to Lake Erie. Although these canals were built in 1850, they were considered then as a considerable achievement by our people.

2. By 1904 all of these canals had reached a depth of 14 feet.

3. At Sault Ste. Marie, four separate canals had been constructed to pass the rapids in the St. Mary's River, which separates Lake Superior from Lake Huron. The two deepest of these were about 18 feet deep, and they included one which had been built by Canada.

The present period of international interest in the St. Lawrence River begins officially about the turn of the century. It involves the concept of a deep waterway with uniform standards from the lakehead to Montreal. The interest had a grass-roots origin in the demands of the inland population of both countries for a more economical connection with the outside world, without regard to boundary waters, without regard to boundary lines and, particularly, without regard to the political border.

This period has been marked by much talk but no new works in the St. Lawrence, and by little talk but continued works and improvement in the upper reaches of the Great Lakes. Canada built the Welland Ship Canal through the Niagara Peninsula. The United States provided three deep locks at Sault St. Marie, including the