

Seaway and Canal Tolls

me if there are some lingering doubts in my mind on this question.

Mr. Churchill: That is a reflection on the Chair.

Mr. Byrne: It was not my intention to argue extensively the question whether tolls should be increased or whether there should be tolls of any description on the St. Lawrence river and its related facilities. However, I think it has been pointed out this afternoon by a number of speakers, and in particular by the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Turner), that this development was the result of an international agreement which was finalized by acts of parliament and by Congress.

I should like to quote the words of a former minister of transport, the hon. member for Northumberland (Mr. Hees), when he answered a question in the house on November 7, 1957, which was posed to him by the then hon. member for Meadow Lake, as reported at page 847 of *Hansard*:

With respect to the hon. member's reference to a decision to impose tolls, I should perhaps remind the house how this matter came about. It is well known that for many years the executive branch of the United States government was unsuccessful in obtaining approval from Congress for an agreement with Canada for the construction of navigation works in the international rapids section of the St. Lawrence river.

Then the hon. member went on to describe the difficulty the President was experiencing in getting this matter to Congress, and he concluded with these words:

Both of these acts provide for the establishment of tolls to make the project self-liquidating.

I think the significant words there, Mr. Speaker, are the words "self-liquidating". This was and is an international agreement. The Leader of the Opposition in this abrogation of international agreements is following a pattern. We have the Columbia river treaty which he failed to consummate. Then there was the treaty on atomic weapons which he failed to carry out. We now have the suggestion that this agreement with the United States be not concluded.

• (9:20 p.m.)

As I said, it was not my intention to argue one way or another the need for an increase in tolls on the seaway.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): We realize that.

Mr. Byrne: I have come across a number of inaccuracies which should be referred to. The motion states that Mr. Gibbings, president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, indicates that the net return to western wheat producers will be reduced by $1\frac{1}{2}$ cents per bushel, should tolls be increased.

I am told that the increase in tolls amounts to 11 cents per ton. The total shipping charge from a point between, say, the midwestern prairie and Montreal is \$18.43 per ton, this figure including handling at the lakehead, railway transportation and lake shipping. The figure will be increased by 11 cents per ton to \$18.54. One will bear in mind that there are approximately 33 bushels to the ton. I note the hon. member for Rosthern (Mr. Nasserden) watching me carefully to see if I know anything about wheat.

When shipping began in 1959, with the advent of the St. Lawrence seaway as an operational project, the wheat board increased wheat prices at the lakehead by $5\frac{1}{2}$ cents a bushel. I will not get into too small fractions, but I think that we still have more than a 5 cent per bushel advantage as a result of the St. Lawrence seaway project—

Mr. Nasserden: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Byrne: Indeed, I would.

Mr. Nasserden: Would the hon. member not agree that this is an increase in the cost of production?

Mr. Byrne: There is no question about that, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the extra charge involves an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ of a cent per bushel in the delivery charges to Montreal. That is self-evident, and I am surprised that the hon. member asked such a simple question.

My principal reason for entering the debate is because this motion was introduced primarily for the protection, if you will, of the wheat growers of western Canada. It has been said by hon. members taking part in the debate that the government has no transportation policy, and that it has done nothing to assist the western farmers.

Because of the terms of the motion, I want to go somewhat into the history of the movement of wheat from western Canada to the lakehead; from the lakehead to Montreal and, of course, to the Atlantic coast. I point out that under the Liberal regime of the Right Hon. Mackenzie King in 1922, the grain delivery rates were first governed by statute.