

Seaway and Canal Tolls

● (8:20 p.m.)

sceptical about it. However, the revenue is raised it must all be considered as coming from increased tolls on the system. I feel that this method of raising revenue is unjust and, possibly, illegal. Since the projected sum involved amounts, roughly, to \$100 millions, an investigation would certainly be worth while.

I understood from the words of the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Turner) that we might expect an increase in tolls almost as a foregone conclusion. I was sorry to hear him give this impression. I was sorry to note the lack of hesitation with which he seemed to argue there was no other way of handling the situation.

It appears that the pleas made by two of the backbenchers on the other side, the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Macaluso) and the hon. member for Welland (Mr. Tolmie) will go unheeded, though they put forward their arguments not from a parochial point of view but, it seemed to me, with the best interests of the entire Canadian economy at heart. Indeed it would have been odd had they spoken otherwise.

It is interesting to note that the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) was in the house for a short time, and then left. It would be interesting to hear his views on this question—to hear whether or not representations had been made to him on behalf of heavy industry in his part of Ontario. I am sure we all know what the answer would be. Anyone who is familiar with the situation knows what the effect will be on the Canadian economy as compared with the United States economy.

We heard the hon. member for Welland say that strong lobbies are being built up in the United States in favour of the institution of tolls. Why not? The benefit on the United States side would be felt largely on the upper great lakes. Those areas will be toll-free. But in southern Ontario, the area from Windsor eastward to lake Ontario, Canadian heavy and secondary industry will have to bear not only an increase arising from higher toll charges but also an increase arising from charges in connection with the Welland canal. Thus will Canadian industry be placed at a disadvantage and United States industry will once again have an advantage over us in a comparable field. This is an important and serious matter in so far as I am concerned.

I come from a part of southwestern Ontario where we are endeavouring to attract secondary industry, but much of the secondary industry we want to attract would be completely submerged if 1 per cent of the production of similar U.S. industry were allowed into the Canadian market. Why should the government, or any agency of it, be permitted to consider even a fractional increase where it disadvantageously affects Canadian industry? This is ridiculous, particularly under present circumstances.

At the present time in the province of Ontario an ambitious program for regional development is being undertaken. But in our part of the country we have witnessed the utter disregard of some ministers in the federal government for areas that need assistance and support. Now we have another instance of the government's failing to move into the area of common sense where Canadian industries are concerned.

The proposal to increase tolls will affect to a large degree development areas in western and northern Ontario, and particularly the shore areas along the seaway and the Welland canal, because the charges will be spread over small ships as well as large ships, and there is no question but that small industries and small centres will be affected in a detrimental way.

We would like an assurance from the government that it is cognizant of the effects of such action by the authority. The least it can do is defer any final decision by the authority. After having been here for some considerable time I am now coming to the opinion that the Canadian people are fed up with being governed by commissions, boards, authorities, and such things, with the ultimate responsibility being taken away from parliament. This is a view which is not held only on this side of the house. From what was said today I know it is also the view of some government supporters who know what the effect of increased charges will be. Surely, Mr. Speaker, it is a known fact that such arbitrary decisions are taken without the benefit of discussion in parliament and without the benefit of discussion by people from the areas directly affected. We should have something to say when this happens.

Not many weeks ago we sat here and listened to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) delivering his budget speech. He mentioned inflationary pressures and said we should cut out this and that. Yet if this