

Seaway and Canal Tolls

only less competitive in export markets but more costly to Canadian citizens and consumers.

Diversion of upbound traffic through the seaway and the Welland ship canal, because of tolls, inevitably would mean higher rates for downbound Canadian grain cargoes from the lakehead. It has been mentioned, and I wish to join in this, that wheat growers pay the transportation costs, a matter in which we at the lakehead are very keenly interested. Our storage capacity is some 110 million bushels a year and a great proportion of the Canadian wheat crop goes through there each year. Wheat growers do pay the shipping costs and therefore the seaway and Welland ship canal tolls also decrease the purchasing power of our prairie farmers and this in turn increases the cost of wheat so as to make it non-competitive.

One important point which should be recognized is that there is really no hope of recovering through tolls the capital cost of building the seaway from Montreal to lake Ontario and in my opinion it would be in the national interest if they were abolished forthwith. This whole subject is a matter of very grave worry to us in northwestern Ontario and I know our worry is shared in western Canada. For the reasons I have stated, together with many more which no doubt will be developed in the course of this debate, we most certainly wish to register our objection to an increase in tolls and ask for the complete elimination of these unprecedented tariffs.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. A. D. Alkenbrack (Prince Edward-Lennox): Mr. Speaker, the greatest highways of the world are not the roads the world has built but the waterways which the world possesses, both natural and man-made. Water-borne commerce has made many nations great and influential. In fact, history shows that nations which do not have navigable waterways have not prospered. As a member representing the southern Ontario riding of Prince Edward-Lennox which is situated on Lake Ontario, I rise to support the proposition and principle that there should be no tolls or lockage fees of any kind in respect of ships of commerce on the Welland canal or on the St. Lawrence seaway.

Although I am one who is in favour of tariffs to protect our industry in certain cases and in vital areas and regions of our country,

[Mr. Andras.]

at the same time I will not support the restriction of international commercial traffic on our waterways. Since our early beginning our country was hampered by the rough and wild nature of our mighty river, the St. Lawrence, hampered by the inadequacy of a series of small canals bypassing the rapids which necessitated the use of smaller ships and then transshipment at sea level to ocean-going traffic. The building of the seaway with the taxpayers' money, however, changed all this. Canada's dreams came true and, with the commodious improvements made at the Welland Canal and at the Sault before the seaway improvements on the St. Lawrence were made, we now enjoy the benefits of a great international waterway and the economic benefits which slowly but surely are building a greater and more influential nation.

I make this last statement because out of it arises a point I wish to make. The St. Lawrence Seaway Authority has no right to place toll charges on vessels plying the Welland canal. The Welland canal existed before the building of the other navigational facilities on the river section of the seaway and its control should remain free and inviolate. The point has been mentioned elsewhere that the seaway is not paying its way and therefore an increase in tolls and navigational charges is required to bring the seaway out of the red. Mr. Speaker, I submit it is not the only public transportation entity in Canada or in the United States which is not paying. If the taxpayers can subsidize the C.N.R., and they are doing just that, the nation likewise can subsidize the St. Lawrence seaway. Another point is that there is no doubt that more than one United States railway company would like to see the seaway tolls increased because such action would indirectly benefit them by diverting transportation business to those railings.

The St. Lawrence seaway may be summed up in this manner: it is a financial failure and at the same time a commercial success. If business has not reached our expectations we should not be alarmed. The decades will take care of this. That which is and always will be the greatest and best form of transportation, the waterways, will accrue in the future to the benefit of Canada if we do not stultify and discourage it now by taxing the users by means of exorbitant fees and tolls. Additional tolls levied now will not only be a deterrent to our western grain trade but a deterrent also to our Ontario grown grain. We must not