

St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act

Lincoln intimated that coal would come up from the maritimes to this seaway.

However, in considering a project costing \$180 million we must realize that grain shipments may not be heavy every year. We hope they will be, but I think some breakdown of the tonnage should be given by the minister in order that the committee would have a better idea of the value of the project.

Mr. McIlraith: I have the figures broken down as between general cargo and bulk cargo, if that would be satisfactory.

Mr. Howe (Wellington-Huron): There is one other question that comes to mind in connection with the St. Lawrence seaway about which some concern is felt in various areas around the great lakes. I refer to the question of water levels. The question of the Chicago drainage canal has been debated in this house many times. I do know that the level of some of the lakes has dropped considerably this year. The hon. member for Welland, in speaking about this question, intimated that there was a seven-year cycle in this connection. I do not know whether we can depend on that seven-year cycle. I am wondering, therefore, if any consideration was given in the pre-engineering studies to the question of making the canal deep enough to take care of the variation in the water levels of the great lakes.

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Chairman, some questions have been raised as to the need for additional capacity in the Welland canal. Perhaps I can best illustrate the need by saying that it was always felt the critical period would be reached when the tonnage figures were somewhere between 40 million and 50 million per year. At the estimated average rate of growth since the inception of the seaway, that is some 8 per cent, that period of time will be somewhere between 1964 and 1966.

Perhaps I could be a little more specific. In 1958 the total volume of traffic on the Welland canal was 21 million tons; in 1959 it was 27.5 million tons; and 1962, over 35 million tons. This year, up to November 14, the tonnage has amounted to 36,972,000 tons. This would indicate that by the end of the season the tonnage would be crowding the 40 million mark. Perhaps I could also give you another illustration. In the 1961 navigation season of 260 days, an average of four vessels were kept waiting on each of 162 days. In 1962 an average of seven vessels were kept waiting on each of 194 days and so far in 1963, an average of seven vessels have been kept waiting on each of 197 days. It will be seen, therefore, that the situation is worsening and if this work is not undertaken now we could be in a very serious situation.

[Mr. Howe (Wellington-Huron).]

In considering this project, we should bear in mind the tremendous importance of shipping facilities to the economy and business of this country and particularly the fact that so much of that business has to do with exports. In the light of these considerations, it will be seen that the matter is both important and urgent. It is quite true that at the moment, because of the volume of wheat sales, many persons are inclined to think only of grain shipments, but these facilities are vital to all parts of the country. It has been demonstrated, of course, by our experience in the last few months, that these facilities are of the utmost importance not only to the grain trade and to the prairie provinces but they are equally vital to other parts of the country.

As the hon. member for Chicoutimi was speaking, I could not help but think of the amount of pulp that is brought through the Welland canal for the pulp and paper industry, and the importance of the Welland canal to that part of the economy of Quebec which supplies so much pulp. The canal is important also to the movement of paper to the export and domestic markets, as well as to the movement of ore from Quebec and Labrador for export to the United States. It is important, too, to the movement of steel from Canadian producing points to the different parts of the country, because of the special importance of lake shipping to the steel industry. It will be seen, therefore, that this is of vital importance to all parts of the country.

While I have picked out the bulk cargoes to illustrate the point I wish to make, I should like to give the hon. member for Wellington-Huron a breakdown of the increased tonnage this year over last year. From April 1 to November 14 the breakdown as between bulk cargo and general cargo is as follows: bulk cargo, from 30,626,427 to 34,791,000 tons; for general cargo in the same period from 1,858,711 tons to 2,181,000 tons. Therefore it will be seen that the increase is in both types of cargo.

As to the question of financing it, there is of course the larger question of the method of financing any or all public works, but for the purpose of this particular legislation we must remember that the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act of 1952 provides that the capital funds shall be obtained by that agency of the government from the Minister of Finance. There are negotiations going on from time to time as the need for borrowing arises, but I think the best answer I can give the hon. member who asked the question is that the average rate of interest on loans to date is approximately 4.5 per cent.

Resolution reported and concurred in.