

St. Lawrence Seaway

That is a well-established pattern. It is the result of the building of a good many substantial intercommunications between Canada and the United States at no cost to the public, except to those drivers of vehicles and pedestrians who use the bridges.

This raises a question as to whether or not the tolls which would be charged for the use of this bridge would be kept entirely separate from the seaway tolls. It seems to me they have no relationship to the tolls which would be charged for the use of the canal. In one case the users of the bridge would pay their tolls and pay the cost of maintenance and ultimately the cost of building the bridge, and separate accounts should be kept. In the other case the users of the canal, or the shippers, would pay their toll for shipping facilities. I am just pointing this out; doubtless these things have received consideration not only by the minister but by the seaway authority.

If that pattern is followed there will be the question of the reversion to public authority of such bridges as the seaway authority may build and the integration of these into the highway systems of the two countries after the bridge has been paid for. I think that is a desirable course to look forward to, rather than to have the seaway authority charged in perpetuity with the maintenance of structures which are in essence a part of the road transportation system of the country.

I am not clear as to how far the proposed new structure will be from the existing bridge. Perhaps the minister could tell me how many miles distant it is to be. If it is approximately in the same location, different considerations arise, I think. I take it that the existing bridge is a self-sustaining bridge; that is, it is maintained by the tolls that are charged and is self-sustaining. I assume that if necessary the new one will also be self-sustaining. It occurs to me that the existing bridge company might be prepared to undertake the construction and operation of a new bridge. It might save the authority the expense of acquiring its shares or a site or the franchise of the existing company; however, those are matters for negotiation. I do agree that the authority ought to have the power to see that proper bridge communication is maintained across the new canal.

One question which arises is whether it has been definitely settled that a subsidiary company will be formed for the purpose of constructing and operating the bridge and, if not, whether the corresponding authority on the United States side, which I believe is called the St. Lawrence seaway development corporation, will undertake the construction of the part of the bridge which is on the United States side.

[Mr. Michener.]

We would be interested in knowing whether or not the policy has been thought out far enough so the minister could say at this time that when the bridge has been paid for by the charging of tolls in due course, it will become a part of the highway system of the country.

Mr. Marler: Mr. Chairman, it is exactly considerations such as those which the hon. member for St. Paul's has just expressed that have lead to the provision in this resolution for the granting of power to the St. Lawrence seaway authority to have a subsidiary corporation. I believe it is the intention of the authority, particularly if arrangements can be concluded with the Cornwall International Bridge Company, to acquire its rights over the existing facilities and to entrust them to a subsidiary corporation so that, just as the hon. member for St. Paul's suggested, the revenues coming from highway tolls would be kept separate from those coming from the seaway.

Perhaps I should not say that this is the sole and exclusive purpose so far as subsidiary corporations are concerned, but I know of no other purposes in mind for subsidiary corporations at this time other than that purpose leading to separating the highway facilities from the collection of tolls from the principal and main activities of the St. Lawrence authority itself which is, of course, to be concerned with tolls from navigation.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the minister just one question, and it is a very simple one. Is the minister yet in a position to give any kind of timetable concerning this whole project, as to when the power station might be in operation and when navigation itself will be opened?

Mr. Marler: Well, Mr. Chairman, in giving these dates I do not want the hon. member to think I am giving a personal undertaking that the project will be completed within these time limits, but I am told it is the objective of the power interests to get into the production of power sometime during the end of the summer of 1958. So far as the navigation facilities are concerned, it is expected that the seaway will be open for navigation for the season of 1959. I do not think there has been any departure from those dates.

When I first became associated with the project it was then said it was expected it would be finished toward the end of 1958, and I do not think there has been any substantial departure from that proposed date of completion. Quite obviously it would be academic to expect the navigation facilities