

*Seaway and Canal Tolls*

about a cent and a half per bushel on the grain that is shipped through the St. Lawrence ports. On the other hand, this situation may be an eye opener for some of our farmers, particularly those in northern Saskatchewan who could make much greater use of the Hudson bay route for shipping grain to Europe. St. Lawrence tolls have no effect on grain shipped through Churchill. It is a saving for the grain growers in northern Saskatchewan, and more use should be made of this.

Long before this question came up in the house, I received many letters from my constituents. Every one of them drew my attention to the fact that this proposed increase in tolls would be a hardship on Canadian farmers who must ship their grain through St. Lawrence ports. A few years ago we only had to contend with wheat and flax, but now rapeseed is going through this route. At a time when we want to establish this industry strongly should we be faced with an increase in freight charges which may be a mortal blow to this new grain industry?

I am very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that you allowed this debate to take place today. It is a very important one and had to take place today for the simple reason that, if it had not, many millions of dollars would have been lost merely because our views would not have been brought strongly to the attention of the government.

● (9:10 p.m.)

Many of the Saskatchewan members stressed this point very strongly, for the simple reason that almost without exception our trade must be carried along the St. Lawrence seaway. I do not want to be repetitious or to delay this matter, because I know other hon. members from the west want to make a strong appeal to the government. I ask that they pay attention to our pleas and see that this increased toll does not come into being. I realize there are some areas of the country which would like to see an increase, but it would be a very serious matter for the western farmer who must ship his grain through the seaway.

I see Mr. Speaker, who made the decision to allow this debate, is now in the chair and I should like to direct my personal thanks to him for allowing us to discuss the matter.

Another matter I should like to bring to the attention of the house is that even though an increase in tolls on the seaway might be requested by the tolls commission, we should never allow matters to reach the point where

[Mr. Rapp.]

the government alone would see fit to increase tolls.

That is all I have to say at the present time. Other members from the west wish to have an opportunity to express their views and the views of the people they represent here in parliament.

**Mr. J. A. Byrne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, in the debate this afternoon the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) in his usual fashion made an unwarranted attack on the members of the cabinet for, as he claimed, not being present during this important debate.

**Mr. Churchill:** Where were they?

**Mr. Knowles:** Yes, where are they?

**Mr. Byrne:** The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) has asked, where are they?

**Mr. Churchill:** North Centre asked, where are they?

**Mr. Byrne:** I am about to ask the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, where were the front benchers of the former administration, the members of the cabinet of the former Conservative government, when the right hon. gentleman was speaking? Not one of those former cabinet ministers was sitting in the front benches. Significantly absent was the hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Hamilton) and a number of others who certainly should have been interested in this important debate.

**Mr. Churchill:** The hon. member has lost two cabinet ministers while he has been speaking. They walked out on him.

**Mr. Byrne:** There was a noticeable lack of western members on the front benches, and that cannot be denied. Furthermore the members of the opposition were forewarned that this debate was about to take place. However, members of the cabinet had made other commitments—

**Mr. Churchill:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the hon. member said that members of the opposition were forewarned that this debate would take place. You, sir, had nothing at all to do with that. You did not tell us in advance. In fact, you took us by surprise.

**Mr. Byrne:** Mr. Speaker, I will have unquestionably to accept the statement by the hon. member. However, you will bear with