

*Blue Water Bridge Authority Bill*

that it was necessary to establish a Blue Water Bridge Authority to maintain and operate the Canadian side of the bridge. The then member for Lambton West said, on April 30, 1964, as reported at page 2762 of *Hansard*:

In the original agreement the village of Point Edward was to receive \$5,000 in lieu of taxes each year. The original agreement did not provide for any Canadians to be appointed to the bridge commission although it was, in fact, an international bridge.

The agreement further stated that when the bonds and debts were retired, the tolls would be discontinued. This took place in 1961. The hon. member for Lambton West at that time recited the history much along the same lines as the hon. member for Lambton-Kent has done today. The hon. member for Lambton-Kent supports the bill and the argument put forth by the former member, as reported at page 2763 of *Hansard* for that day.

Here we had two members recognizing the need to work together, so there was certainly unanimity at that particular time and, as the hon. member for Lambton-Kent said, the bill received careful scrutiny in the other place and I can only assume from his support of the bill that it received careful scrutiny from him. It is, therefore, appropriate that the member for Lambton-Kent should present the bill at this time in the interests of tidying up what he sees as a gap in the provisions of Bill S-4.

I, too, have been somewhat apprehensive about the provisions of section 19, because I felt it placed members of the Blue Water Bridge Authority in a rather difficult position in that they could not, and cannot to this date, under the provisions of this bill as it now stands give out financial statements to the general public but only to those people designated by the governor in council. This bridge authority stood ready and prepared to do this at any time.

When I prepared my remarks in connection with this bill I had no idea of the stance to be taken by the hon. member for Lambton-Kent, but I was certain that the hon. member was not suggesting there was anything wrong with the present operation of the bridge nor that any funds had been misappropriated or misused. I was happy when he said this afternoon he was making no such charge. In fact, he suggested that the bridge is admirably run but the problem is one of getting these statements to the general public. He was simply making these representations to tidy up what he feels is a looseness in section 19(1).

He will know from earlier conversations that this has been a matter of concern to me as well and I, too, have been stressing both with the Department of Transport and with the Department of External Affairs that the section should be changed if only to protect the interests of those who presently serve, without pay, as members of the Blue Water Bridge Authority.

When certain questions were raised by the hon. member for Lambton-Kent, the then general manager of the bridge wrote the hon. member a letter dated June 15, 1971. The hon. member reads it in one way and I read it in another. The manager of the Blue Water Bridge Commission, operating under the strictures that are imposed by section 19(1), wrote that they could not make their financial statements public, could only make them available to those designated by the governor in council, but were

[Mr. Cullen.]

prepared to do so when they received the necessary authority. The letter went on to say that because of the hon. member's interest in the bill they would like him to have a full picture of exactly what was happening.

I should like to quote one part of the letter which the hon. member did not see fit to read:

With this feeling in mind then the authority members extend to you an invitation to visit the bridge offices, there to see the operation in all phases, there to meet and talk with any or all of the commissioners you care to see or the general manager or the treasurer or the auditors, W. L. Smith & Co., and there to receive complete and detailed answers to any and all questions you care to ask about present or past operations.

We have on hand complete records of every cent ever taken in (attested to by four signatures and an auditors check) and a cancelled cheque for every penny spent. We will have on hand a signed, audited, detailed record of any commissioners' expense account complete with receipts for any trip ever taken by any commissioner or employee on behalf of the bridge.

The letter states that they hoped he would accept this invitation. This does not answer the hon. member but simply points out in my opinion the way in which the bridge commission and its manager's hands are tied under section 19(1). They were endeavouring to operate under the strictures imposed by the legislation. So they were not hiding anything but trying to indicate that everything was on the up and up, but they really did not have the authority to do what we feel is necessary. Therefore, the hon. member for Lambton-Kent quite properly is bringing forward Bill C-16 which is the subject matter of this whole question. The hon. member is simply suggesting another route or another procedure which in his opinion would be preferable to the one existing under section 19(1) of the bill.

I have been advised, however, that the government is quite pleased with the hon. member's opinion of the Blue Water Bridge Act, but it does not see the need for the amendments the hon. member is proposing. Indeed, I am happy to inform the House that in accordance with section 19 of the Blue Water Bridge Act, the section which the hon. member wishes to replace, an appropriate order in council is now being prepared requiring the bridge authority to submit an audited financial report annually to the Minister of Transport. I say it is about time, but in any even it is being done.

I accept the support of the hon. member in bringing forth these questions in respect of the bill and his support in conversations we have had personally as well as on radio and before the television cameras. This is like motherhood week. Such a procedure would be in keeping with the practice relating to the analogous Crown-owned, income-earning bodies. The hon. member's amendment would have the bridge authority submit its financial reports to the Auditor General. I suggest, with respect, that the Auditor General is responsible for auditing public funds, funds derived from taxation, not from the sale of services by an entity which is not a government department.

The proposal I have outlined I think better reflects the long standing Canadian practice. I believe the hon. member for Lambton-Kent indicated this in fact would meet his need as long as we went along with long standing Canadian practice. Our goal is similar. The means are slightly different, but I think the hon. member will con-