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QUEBEC

INTERNATIONALIZING OF THE ST. LAWRENCE

To the Editor of The Gazette:

Sir,—Everything is ready now on the part of the United States for the turning of the St. Lawrence River into a great international waterway to the Great Lakes. The President has given his approval of the scheme. The money can be easily raised and all that now remains is for poor little Canada to give her consent, and allow one of the greatest rivers in the world, ninety per cent. of the course of which lies in Canada alone, to become a joint possession with the wealthy and ambitious nation to the south. Cutting through the heart of our Dominion, the river, which is now ours alone, will henceforth, if the project is carried out, be only half ours. International laws, rights and the vested interests of another nation are going to grip our great national highway for all time. In short, Canada is selling the St. Lawrence, and all that the sole possession of so magnificent a natural waterway means in the future of our country. Are there no Canadians in Canada sufficiently interested in the building up of our young nation, and sufficiently free from the selfish and sordid occupation of "getting rich quick" who will give their attention to a transaction which is going to have deciding effect upon our destiny for all time? If we sell the St. Lawrence, we shall never be able to buy it back. It will be gone from us forever. The hundreds of millions of dollars necessary to the making of our river into an international waterway are going to come from the United States. We, with our huge national debt, have no money to squander in the dubious project. The money will come from the United States. The ninety per cent. of the purely Canadian river will come from us. The sole ownership of the river during that ninety per cent. of its course, will cease to be Canada's, and a joint partnership in its waters will be begun, so far as you can have a joint partnership between a wealthy and powerful nation who supplies all, or almost all, of the capital invested, and a small and poor nation who watches the manipulation of the river so that it may become tributary to the commercial greed of Chicago and the New England States, where the need of new sources of electric energy is so keenly felt.

What becomes of our new Dominion status, and the new aspirations inspired by it, if we begin to enter into joint housekeeping in the matter of our priceless river with the United States? It is about time that a strong nationalist sentiment in Canada put an end to the danger of foreign concessions in our young country. The internationalizing of a natural feature of such magnitude and potential significance as the St. Lawrence River stabs at the very heart of our sense of independence, and our hopes for a great future. It will not add to the amour propre of the old Province of Quebec to find itself looking down upon the waters of an American-made canal, subject to American interests and governed by international agreements.

We are in too much of a hurry in Canada to sell our resources to the first bidder. We must take our time and do our own business ourselves. We can do it. In the past sixty years of our federated life, Canada has done wonders and made long strides. I can remember hearing a little battery of guns in front of McGill College, Montreal, firing a royal salute on July 1st, 1867, when the Act of Confederation was signed. The new-born baby Canada was a small thing then. But I can remember in France, on the jubilee of our Confederation, July 1st, 1917, hearing the guns of the great Canadian Corps, firing their salutes of world freedom upon the enemy. Canada had achieved full manhood then. I shall probably not hear the royal salute fired which will herald the arrival of Canada's Centenary, but I want to be certain that it will be fired. We can only be certain that it will be fired, if we guard as a sacred trust for our descendants the absolute freedom of every acre of land and water in our national inheritance. Let that slip from us, by ever so small a degree, and our status, not only in the British Commonwealth of Nations, but our wider status among the nations of the world, is imperilled.

FREDERICK GEORGE SCOTT.

Quebec, January 20th, 1927.

F. G. Scott