

As its name implies, the Victoria bridge dates back to the glorious time of the great queen under whose reign so many great enterprises were born. The construction of this bridge takes us back to a time before confederation. In fact it was authorized in 1853 by chapter 75, Victoria, which statute allowed the Grand Trunk Railway Company to carry out this enterprise and to collect tolls from vehicles using the bridge.

Of course at that time only horse-drawn vehicles were concerned. At the time of its construction, no doubt because of its length—because it has practically no artistic value—this bridge was considered as one of the wonders of the world. We can say the same thing today, but for different reasons. I would say it is still one of the wonders of the world, because it has remained a toll bridge ever since the beginning of its operation some ninety years ago. Then, of course, it is a wonder because of its old age.

During the period of eighty-seven years the owners of the bridge have collected tolls, the revenues from which have never ceased to increase from year to year with the rising population, with the ever-increasing intensity of traffic, both from horse-drawn vehicles and from automobiles, and also with the development of the tourist industry.

The principle which should be applied in connection with the imposition of tolls of that kind on a bridge is that the bridge should become free when its cost of construction has been paid for by the users. Immediately one must conclude that in the present instance the cost of construction must have been paid many times over, since tolls on that bridge have been imposed for more than eighty years.

But there are other reasons for coming to that conclusion. Between 1897 and 1900 the Grand Trunk Railway Company had rebuilt in part the Victoria bridge to allow the addition of two vehicular lanes, one on each side of the bridge. The total cost of the project was \$1,883,679. So far as the cost of installation of these two vehicular lanes is concerned, it was in the neighbourhood of \$100,000. Then, it should be said that motorists and owners of other vehicles using these lanes have been paying for forty-seven years, since 1900, to defray the reimbursement of that \$100,000 which was spent for the installation of the lanes. When one learns that there were years when the revenues have reached \$500,000 he will rightly conclude that the cost of construction of these two lanes for vehicles has been paid nearly five times annually, through the revenues derived from tolls. But this, again, is only part of the truth.

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In fact, during the course of the session of 1900 the Grand Trunk Railway Company, for the purpose of rebuilding the Victoria bridge and the addition of these lanes for vehicles, to which I have referred, obtained from the federal government a subsidy totalling \$500,000. We must then conclude that the users of these two vehicular lanes for traffic have been called upon, since the year 1900, to pay and are still paying today to reimburse an expense the cost of which was covered by a subsidy granted by the federal government.

Even at that time, in 1900, the grant of that subsidy to the Grand Trunk Railway Company seemed so excessive that it brought a flood of protest in the house. I have read with care the debate which took place at that time, after the then minister of railways and canals asked authorization in his budget to impose on the Canadian people this great expense. The item of the budget reads as follows:

To the Grand Trunk Railway Company of Canada towards the cost of rebuilding and enlargement of the Victoria bridge over the St. Lawrence river, Quebec, in addition to the amount received by the company on account of the subsidy granted by 60-61 Victoria, chapter 4, viz., \$270,000 to make up the grant in aid of the undertaking to \$500,000 not exceeding \$230,000.

The subsidy asked for seemed so much out of proportion, especially when account was taken of the fact that the Grand Trunk Railway Company had always collected tolls and intended to keep on doing so, that violent protests were registered.

One of the members of the opposition, Mr. Cochrane, spoke as follows on the question, as reported at page 9989 of *Hansard* for 1900:

If the Grand Trunk railway saw fit to reconstruct that bridge it was their own business and not ours. We have paid all this country could afford to pay as a subvention to the Grand Trunk railway. Now why, after giving a subvention of \$300,000 do you want to give them \$200,000 more when you are paying \$40,000 a year for the users of that bridge?

And later the same member of the opposition declared:

Why do you not put in a condition that the people should travel over the Victoria bridge free and then you will get something for the people in return for that subvention?

Consequently, in 1900 one of the members of the house was asking the government of that day to abolish tolls on the Victoria bridge. Today, nearly fifty years later, I have the privilege of making the same demand. This seems to indicate that times goes on, but things are done slowly.

Since then, there has remained only one lane for the use of motorists, because I believe