

*The Address—Mr. Bell*

has said that it looks as though we are pallbearers at our own funeral. I would add to that statement that we are not only pallbearers at our own funeral, but we are also paying for that funeral.

I want to review, Mr. Speaker, some of the events which took place during the last season. I do so in an effort to be helpful, and I hope my remarks will again be considered unpartisan. I begin by saying that it has been a good year in the ports of Halifax and Saint John. The latest figures show a reduction of about 1 per cent in general cargo tonnage, which is the method of assessing the true value of the traffic of a port. Grain has been very high, and we are grateful for that; but the events which began in December, and which have continued to date, show that the everlasting merry-go-round is still continuing. It is impossible to sort through the many stories and press reports, but there are four aspects of the icebreaking question which come to my mind, and which since I last spoke on the matter have taken on a new and different interpretation.

First of all there is the excuse given that icebreaking helps to guard against flooding. To this excuse has been added the additional one that icebreaking is now necessary because of the world fair construction. I wonder whether the cost of this icebreaking is included in the extravagant losses we are going to have on the world fair, as announced the other day. This icebreaking happened in December, at a time when spring flooding was far back in everyone's mind. It seems difficult, as far as maritimers are concerned, to believe the excuse that icebreaking was done on account of flooding. A short while ago, when these specially reinforced ships slipped through Montreal harbour, they followed a path broken by the icebreaker; and at the time it was said that this was not assistance but merely a coincidence.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you how gullible we maritimers are supposed to be, when we are asked to believe that this was a coincidence. Everybody knows that the Department of Transport maintains an ice information office at Sydney, and the whereabouts of every ship in the ice floes is known to every other ship. In other words the full information relating to icebreaking activity is known to every ship that goes up the channel.

Many people have said that this is progress, and I must admit quite honestly that I myself, in an effort to be a good Canadian, have stated that we in the maritimes should not stand in the way of progress; but I seriously say that the use of the word "progress" is improper in this case. We have the facilities, and we have demonstrated that we can handle in an even more efficient manner all

the traffic that goes through the St. Lawrence or is capable of dispatch at the present time. I ask, is it progress to use the taxpayers' money to build up facilities on the St. Lawrence while our own excellent docks and sheds are allowed to lie idle? It is up to the government to move quickly so as to avoid an indecisive year, and this is the problem I put forward to the new minister. I hope he will accept this challenge, as the maritimer that he aspires to be.

I want to mention quickly again the two interrelated solutions that have been put forward, and I hope the new minister will accept these as constructive suggestions, and that a new policy will emerge under his guidance, a policy that will end the indecision and vacillation so that we in the maritimes will know where we fit into this important matter. First is the proposal to assess the icebreaker costs to the users of such service and the second, and closely related, is to subsidize the rail freight that moves to and from Saint John and Halifax in the winter.

Dealing with the first suggestion, may I say it can be very simply stated; that the users of the icebreaking service should pay the tune; not you and I, the Canadian taxpayers, but those who use this service. In connection with this matter I have here a resolution passed by the Saint John common council on January 10 this year. I shall not read the preamble but it states:

Further that if it should occur again—

—referring to the misuse of icebreakers—

—that the government of Canada be asked to charge a minimum fee per day in each case of a vessel making use of icebreaker service, whether requested or otherwise, to reach the St. Lawrence up-river ports during the period that the St. Lawrence seaway locks are closed, such period being the accepted "winter port" shipping season—such charge to cover the full cost of the icebreakers' operation.

Statements have been made that the Dan icebreaking ships are not an economic proposition. Surely then if they were assessed the full costs, their winter St. Lawrence activities would cease. In fact, to underline their own shaky future, a company official stated today, as reported in the *Montreal Gazette*:

Next year the line hopes to continue reaching Montreal during the winter but that would depend on conditions. Any decision would have to wait until the Canadian authorities decide whether they are going to keep the channel open.

This, I suggest, presupposes an early decision that next year the St. Lawrence is going to be kept open all year round. The icebreaking costs are tremendous, even without the new \$18 million icebreaker, and if a channel is to be kept open then every