

St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act

anything the matter with the amount of money which was being expended for the Welland canal, or did he just discover it when he made his speech a while ago? Furthermore he was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, with whose approval this report and this budget must be tabled in the house. Now, I ask how ridiculous is it—

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Should we have repudiated the contracts?

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): May I ask the hon. gentleman if this present government should have repudiated the contracts which his government made?

The Chairman: I must ask hon. members to respect the authority of the chair. It is not permitted to interrupt the hon. member who is speaking, and I will therefore ask hon. members please to permit the member for Laurier to finish his remarks.

Mr. Chevrier: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. members who have taken part in this debate have complained that there has been no publicity, no knowledge, no news. Let us take a look at the record. In 1956, when I was still there, there was produced by the St. Lawrence seaway authority a progress report dealing with each contract in each section, and on the last page but one is contained the list of all the contracts awarded until that time by the seaway authority. Then in June of 1957, when I was no longer there and when the present Minister of Transport and his government formed the government, there was produced another progress report giving the position of the seaway authority contracts as they stood at that time. There were four contracts awarded in respect of the Welland ship canal—McNamara Construction Company Limited, Canadian Dredge and Dock Limited, J. P. Porter Company Limited, and Russell Construction. These are the four major contracts about which the hon. gentleman complained and they were contained in this report made by the administration of which the hon. gentleman was a member.

Then came the month of December, 1957. A similar report was issued in detail, publishing all the contracts, and again there appeared a list of the contracts up to date concerning the Welland ship canal. I am told that another of these progress reports was published in the month of June, 1958. I have not seen it. I presume it was far more up to date than this one, but there is, I am sure, a detailed statement of the contracts that were given. More than that, there was never a contract given by the St. Lawrence seaway authority

[Mr. Chevrier.]

which was not fully publicized; publicized by the signing of the contract with the participants and those who were to effect the contract, made publicly in the presence of the members in the headquarters office of the St. Lawrence seaway authority in Montreal. Then a press release followed each and every contract containing the details and the amount of money to be expended.

I ask the committee: was this not the proper way in which to proceed? Apparently hon. members opposite think not. Then the hon. member for Carleton said I proceeded to place the blame upon others. I did no such thing. I did not attempt to place the blame on anyone. I simply placed on the record the estimate which was prepared by the director of the engineering staff of the Department of Transport and furnished to me when I was minister of transport. I do not know of any other way of doing it. How else could I estimate the cost? Does the hon. gentleman expect me to have gone to the Welland canal and gone down into 25 feet of water to ascertain what was there? Engineering reports have been made by Canada and the United States over the years which indicated what the position was.

The hon. gentleman spent at least 15 minutes to say that I had given the estimate for the Welland as being \$1,300,000. Of course I did. I make no apology for that. He went on also to quote my remarks to the lumbermen's association. I do not remember what was said on that occasion, but if the hon. gentleman says I said \$2 million I accept it because I probably did say it. There was no other estimate at the time. How else was I to proceed?

Mr. Bell (Carleton): That is all I said.

Mr. Chevrier: Yes, but you took 15 minutes to say that. If you had listened to what I said earlier you would have realized that I put that on the record almost an hour before you got to your feet.

Now the hon. gentleman says there is no comparison between the amount of information given to congress in the United States and that provided to parliament here. Mr. Chairman, that is not only true of the seaway but it is true of a number of problems having to do with both Canada and the United States. I need not remind this committee, surely, of what facilities a congressman or a senator has compared with a member of parliament or a senator in this country. They enjoy tremendous facilities compared with those available to us. The United States, being a large country, is able to spend far greater sums of money in order to make such information available.