

St. Lawrence Seaway

some other part of the work, must in the final analysis be the subject of tolls whether they are paid by the St. Lawrence seaway development corporation or by the seaway authority, in the last analysis must come out of the traffic that is going to use the canal, so that personally I do not attach too much importance to exact equality in any particular operation provided the principles of equity are respected.

The hon. gentleman also asked a question as to the amount of the tolls. All I can say to him is that I do not know what is the tariff of tolls now being charged, and I do not know what is going to happen when these changes are carried out. I am quite sure the hon. member will appreciate the difficulties of the situation. I am thinking merely of the road traffic at the moment. The bridge company really owns three distinct properties, the present bridge over the south channel, the highway across Cornwall island and finally the bridge over the north channel.

If one expropriates the bridge over the south channel I take it that, independently of any other considerations, there may be a claim for total destruction of the whole enterprise because you cannot operate two-thirds without having something in substitution of the remainder. I can conceive that possibly, though I am not predicting the future course of events, the rights of the bridge company might conceivably be exercised over Pollys Gut bridge instead of over the bridge over the south channel. In that event there would be tolls in respect of the use of that bridge, just as there are at present in respect of the use of the bridge over the south channel.

I find it difficult to see all the possibilities. I am hopeful that it will be possible for the seaway authority to reach an agreement with the bridge company by which the authority will acquire by agreement, and not by expropriation—because there is no question of expropriation in this aspect of the question—the shares of the bridge company, and thus eliminate all the long drawn-out business of determining the damages in the rearrangement of the works.

It seems to me that is probably a simple solution but, as hon. members realize, it is quite one thing to talk about making a reasonable arrangement and another actually to conclude one. People's ideas of what is a reasonable price I find vary very considerably, and it may well be that what the authority considers to be a reasonable price for the shares of the bridge corporation is a long way from that which is entertained by the shareholders themselves. At all events, as I hoped to make clear earlier,

we are not asking that the authority be given power to expropriate the shares, it may exercise the power to expropriate only physical properties. We are asking merely for the power to acquire these shares by agreement.

Mr. Johnston (Bow River): I am not clear on one question. Will this establish the principle that tolls be charged on all international bridges?

Mr. Marler: I do not think so, Mr. Chairman. I do not think really any principle is at stake here, particularly as we have a state of affairs that has existed for a long time, and I do not believe it can be suggested that we are consecrating a principle eternally. I rather suspect that if the facilities are built it would be reasonable to expect that tolls will continue, and my own general impression—I do not want to engage in a debate about the virtues or demerits of tolls—is that if there are tolls it is more likely the facilities would be kept up than if there are no tolls and merely hopes for those who would like to have better facilities.

Mr. Michener: What I have to say is largely in the nature of an inquiry, too, because there are so many uncertainties in a project of this kind which will only be resolved as it is proceeded with. One can readily appreciate that the construction of the canal, the deepening of the waterway and the construction of power plants will make it necessary to relocate facilities, including bridges, and perhaps make it necessary to construct bridges which did not exist before. I would have thought that, as suggested by the hon. member for Oxford, the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act was broad enough to permit the construction of bridges but, in any event, there is no harm in confirming that authority by additional legislation.

The consideration that arises in the construction of a bridge suggests to me a reference to the well-established pattern of international bridges which has been developed in the course of some time with respect to bridges and tunnels between Canada and the United States. In the main these are semi-public authorities, and they are all toll bridges or toll tunnels. They are self-liquidating. They have usually been financed by bond issues subscribed by the public, and tolls have been devoted to the paying off of the cost of construction. The bridge authorities with which many hon. members are familiar then turn the structures over to the appropriate governmental authorities when the bonds have been retired, and then it is a matter for the government to decide whether or not tolls should be continued.