

*Seaway and Canal Tolls*

on the subject of the possibility of toll increases on shipping on the great lakes. Some time ago I asked the Minister of Transport what was the position of his government with respect to these increases. His reply was that in due course the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority would ask for briefs, brochures and other representations from various organizations. When the facts were made known to them, they would make a decision and inform the government of it. Nothing up to that point would become mandatory or operative until the government, in turn, passed an order in council implementing the recommendation.

● (9:00 p.m.)

The purpose of this debate today is to give parliament an opportunity to talk and make representations to the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority before they make their decision. It was extremely disturbing to me when the house leader on the government side tried to find some means of putting off this debate under standing order 26, by means of which we sought to discuss these tolls. I am glad that it has been going forward. I have listened to many of the speeches this afternoon and I must say that if these representations reach the ears of the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority, they should have the desired effect.

Who is going to make these representations to the authority? Well, it may be the wheat pools or it may be the United Grain Growers in so far as wheat is concerned. This dispute affects not only grain shippers but every type of shipper. What is the implication of an increase in rates? Anyone knows that when you set rates on the lakes or any other transportation system, that changes and moves a lot of other things. What formerly looked like a good market could now be out of reach of a particular industry simply because of the increase in rates. This could happen.

It is no wonder that many people are exercised about what is going to happen to the rate structure which has been in effect for a number of years. If these rates are to be increased, as is proposed, by a cent and a half or whatever it is, this would cost the farmers of western Canada roughly \$5 million in extra transportation charges on their wheat going through Fort William or Port Arthur. This would be \$5 million they would not get. The only way you can look at the situation is that this sum comes directly out of the pockets of the farmers of western Canada. It will be money they will not have to spend. It

will reduce their standard of living, and many have incomes which will not stand this additional charge.

We hope that this discussion will cause the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority to pause and reconsider any recommendations which they might wish to make to the government. We would expect, therefore, when the decision is made it will be amply supported. If that is not the case, then it will be the duty of this government to ascertain the facts and decide what they intend to do. We do not feel like leaving it to this government because they do not have too good a reputation for taking action on matters of this kind in favour of the producers and people of western Canada.

There is another aspect to this entire question, namely, why not balance the raising of tolls on the great lakes against a possible reduction in volume, if you raise the rates? If the rates are raised, someone is going to decide that he cannot afford to pay them and will not ship. What do you want? You cannot have it both ways. It would be better to leave the rates as they are and increase the volume. This would bring in a certain sum of money. If, on the other hand, you raised the rates and had less shipping you might end up with the same amount of money.

From an economic point of view, and from the point of view of the good of Canada as a whole, I think there is no question but what an increase in the volume of shipping and keeping the toll rates as they are would produce more money than the raising of rates and the curtailment of shipping. I hope therefore that this St. Lawrence Seaway Authority will take this point into consideration and think twice before they raise the rates on the great lakes system.

I am glad that this debate in parliament has given everyone who is concerned with this problem an opportunity to express his views. I do hope that in due course the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority will make their recommendations and that those recommendations will be of a nature which will not raise the tolls on the great lakes system.

**Mr. Reynold Rapp (Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale):** I do not want to be repetitious, Mr. Speaker, but I feel I would be remiss in my duty if I did not speak on this matter of raising tolls on the St. Lawrence seaway. This proposal is made at a time when our farmers are caught in the price squeeze and when they are receiving less and less for their products. This threatened increase amounts to