

Bridges

also have to pay the toll charged the passengers in all vehicles, with the sole exception of those who use a public bus.

I can also add that Longueuil, Montreal South, St. Lambert and other municipalities on the south shore of the St. Lawrence have seen a tremendous increase in population during those years.

One can easily see the burden which these thousands of taxpayers have to carry. They are charged a sort of indirect tax while everywhere else people can cross any bridge without having to pay a cent.

And what about the thousands of Montrealers who use that bridge many times a day? They also have grounds for complaining about such an anomaly which puts upon them charges of which residents of the other communities of the province of Quebec and of all other provinces are exempt.

I know the cost of building the Jacques Cartier bridge was very high, reaching the amount of \$18 million, and that there is still a considerable amount outstanding. Yet conditions were the same with regard to the Quebec bridge, on which the toll was abolished.

In 1928, the province of Quebec was authorized by the Canadian National Railways to build a vehicular road on the bridge, on certain conditions. It was also allowed to charge a toll for automobiles and passengers. This toll was put into effect and abolished a few years later, as it was on all other bridges belonging to the province of Quebec. In 1948, the latter was authorized to build another vehicular road; this time the permit stipulated that no toll should be charged. At the time of both agreements, the province of Quebec was to assume the maintenance of both vehicular roads, and establish a sinking fund with regard to these two roads. Although the bridge was the property of the Canadian National Railways, an agreement was signed between the Canadian government—not the Canadian National—and the government of the province of Quebec. As I was saying, it was a matter of paying interest on the amount spent for building this road and of setting up a sinking fund which, if I remember rightly, was not to exceed \$400,000.

Should the government accept my point of view and meet with the provincial authorities in order to work out an agreement on the matter of tolls on the Jacques Cartier and Victoria bridges, I believe the contract signed in relation to the Quebec bridge could be

used as a basis for discussion. An estimate could perhaps be made of the cost of the vehicular road on the bridge to find out the amount of capital invested for that purpose. It would then be easy to agree on an amount, a reasonable rate of interest and to set up a sinking fund which would eventually reimburse the national harbours board for part of the amount expended for the construction of this bridge.

As far as the Jacques Cartier bridge is concerned, I am sure the situation is different from that of the Victoria bridge. Indeed, I am wondering if the Jacques Cartier bridge would ever have been built if the province had not been willing to assume certain responsibilities together with the city of Montreal. The contract must be respected but consideration must be given to the situation in which the users find themselves.

I deem it advisable to make a thorough study of that contract, and to negotiate a new agreement which would satisfy all the parties interested and more particularly the citizens of the province of Quebec and of Montreal. I am wondering whether the citizens of Montreal should really have to do more than anybody else in the province of Quebec toward meeting the deficit. I repeat that this was admissible in 1930 when it was a matter of building the bridge, but now the operating deficit has been reduced, and, taking into consideration the possibility of such an agreement with the province of Quebec, I believe that the city of Montreal should not be forced, in such a case—no more than Longueuil and adjoining municipalities, Outremont for instance, the mayor of which is here with us—some day or other to make good the deficits created through a tax assessment established by the metropolitan district for the whole island of Montreal. I do not wish to raise that question because I would be out of order; I am simply reminding the house that the city of Montreal should not have to pay anything whatsoever for the upkeep of the bridge or for the maintenance of a sinking fund.

Therefore, in my humble opinion, nothing would prevent us from obtaining, following negotiations in which everybody would show sufficient good will, the same results which were brought about when the problem of the Quebec bridge was taken up. In my humble opinion, the present problem would be even easier to solve.