

Transportation

● (4:50 p.m.)

In terms of money, with general cargo volume running in the order of 1½ million tons annually, as it has been for the last year or so, it can be reliably estimated that revenue accruing to the local economy in the first instance—this is the direct benefit—is of the order of \$16½ million. Bulk cargo is running around 7¾ million tons. This bulk cargo will create another \$2 million to \$2¼ million, making in all a direct value to the port and the local economy of some \$18 million annually. This is direct money, money that has the effect of diffusing itself throughout the economy. The figure of \$18 million is a fairly conservative one; it could be higher, and indeed we wish it were.

It has been reliably estimated by the Port of Halifax Commission and other studies, one of which was carried out for the Atlantic Development Board a couple of years ago, that the further implementation and encouragement of year-round navigation on the St. Lawrence river will substantially cut into this volume to the extent of some 30 per cent to 40 per cent. Here again, I use a conservative estimate; some people have suggested it could go as high as 60 per cent to 70 per cent. In terms of the frozen position in which we find ourselves with regard to general traffic through our port, the latter figure I mentioned is more likely to be the accurate one.

In terms of tonnage we will take the more conservative figure of 30 per cent to 40 per cent. This will mean a drop from 1½ million tons annually to fewer than 750,000 tons the economic consequences of which to the port would indeed be very grave and serious. It can be seen quite readily that this is a serious matter for the port of Halifax. The port is indeed one of the main economic sectors in the area. If it falls into a loss position of this order, or even worse, there is no possible way other than by government planning, to regain or recoup our position.

The loss of some 500,000 tons of general cargo would represent, at current approximate rates of pay, some 400,000 longshoremen hours at approximately \$3 an hour, or \$1,200,000 in direct pay and compensation. But the over-all revenue that would be lost to the ports could be of the order of \$6,500,000. These figures are based upon the current rate of some \$13 a ton for the handling of cargo in Halifax.

Substantiation of these figures may be found in a study by J. Cates and Associates, a consulting firm who carried out a study for

[Mr. Forrestall.]

the Atlantic Development Board in 1964. In their report to the Atlantic Development Board, they estimated that the ports of Saint John and Halifax have experienced a combined loss due to the direct and indirect effect of winter navigation on the St. Lawrence river and the gulf of some 150,000 to 250,000 short tons per season of trans-shipment or through-cargo. Because of the difficulty of estimating what the traffic patterns of the Atlantic and lower St. Lawrence river ports, chiefly Quebec, Trois-Rivières and Montreal would have been in the absence of winter navigation, the assessment of traffic loss must be regarded solely as broad approximations, but nevertheless relatively accurate.

It is considered by the consultants that however you look at it, the approximate loss of 200,000 short tons is a reasonable estimate of the annual traffic that we have lost since the extension of winter icebreaking on the St. Lawrence river. In terms of dollars and cents, the same consultants have advised the Atlantic Development Board that on a seasonal basis this would represent a loss each year of some \$3 million of direct income to the port economies and some 3,600 man-months of seasonal employment. This is an area that has long been close to the minister's heart, I am sure. His record inside and outside the house has been commensurate with the extent of its seriousness.

It can be seen from this that any further attempt at this time to extend, encourage, foster or fail to impede the extension of navigation on the St. Lawrence river, without first having committed some public authority, and in this case it must be the federal authority, to sound planning with regard to Halifax and Saint John will have a disastrous effect. I think the minister knows well what the feelings are in Halifax and Saint John. We accept the position—we accept it more privately, admittedly, than we do publicly—that we cannot continue to fight the battle against the ports of Montreal, Quebec, Trois-Rivières, and so on, too much longer. It is incumbent upon us, however, to fight that battle so long as the government has not clearly enunciated its plans for the ports of Halifax and Saint John. I will deal with that matter in a little more depth later on.

In its submission to the transportation committee, the Port of Halifax Commission dealt with this question. Perhaps I might interject here briefly to say that this committee has been sitting for some months, I think with considerable success, and is deserving of the