

Meanwhile, Mr. McCutcheon, rest assured that we have since our inception filed annual, audited, financial reports in Ottawa with the Department of Transport who we were instructed to report to.

How does one square that statement, which is written by W. H. Young, a civil servant and employee of the authority, that they file their report with the Department of Transport, when a few months earlier the chairman of the commission, the man charged with the responsibility, said that they report every year to the Auditor General? I am not attaching blame to the Blue Water Bridge Authority; I am attaching blame to the cabinet, to the governor in council which has not given the proper direction. Neither the chairman nor the paid manager knew where they were reporting.

This closing paragraph of the letter I like particularly; I do not know who they thought they were kidding:

You are of course at liberty to release this letter to the press if you care to do so. We look forward to seeing you.

One thing is clear, Mr. Speaker, from the answers given to questions and correspondence: at no time has the governor in council directed this authority to report any place in particular. I say that the government has abandoned its responsibility in this regard. To prove my point, I have before me a letter from the Automotive Transport Association of Ontario dated March 7, 1972, and addressed to me. It reads in part:

We do not know what your interest may be in the bridge, but we thought we would tell you that some of our people objected to the second toll increase in two years. The objection was made to the Canadian Transport Commission who reported they had no authority to entertain any protest.

So it looks to me as if there has been an abandonment by the government of responsibility to the authority in Sarnia. Do you think, Mr. Speaker, that you could get any information from the Department of Transport? I doubt it. Could you get it from the Auditor General? I say that would be pretty questionable. Which department of government has the information? For the benefit of my colleagues in the House, the last I heard was that it was hidden some place in external affairs, and I doubt very much whether chairman Blunt knows that either. If you happen to be interested, Mr. Speaker, as a special dispensation you could accompany me to Sarnia where the authority has given me such a warm invitation to come and visit them. But unless the rest of my colleagues in the House are invited, I do not think they will get in.

I ask for the support of my colleagues in the House on this matter. In my opinion it is a reasonable request I make to treat this authority in the same way as Crown corporations and other government bodies are treated. However, if hon. members opposite wish to keep this matter *sub rosa*, if they want suspicion still to shroud the dealings of this authority, then I suggest they can practise on their oratorical skills and talk this bill out. If they do that, the responsibility for continuing this confusion will rest squarely on their shoulders. May I say in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that even so it really will not matter all that much. There may be a slight delay, but I promise them that after the next election the new government of which I will be a member will see to it that this bill is put through promptly.

Blue Water Bridge Authority Bill

Mr. Jack Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly encouraged to hear that Liberal fortunes have gone up so much that the hon. member for Lambton-Kent (Mr. McCutcheon) has seen fit to announce that he is going to join the Liberal party and form part of the government after the next election. I think that both of us wrote our speeches this morning when we thought an election was going to be announced at two o'clock this afternoon.

In all seriousness, I must confess that I was apprehensive that the bill of the hon. member might not be reached during this session and that we would not have an opportunity to debate it. Anyone who has made a study of the history of the Blue Water Bridge, as I have, will have to concede that Ross W. Gray, Q.C., who was a Liberal member of this parliament from 1927 till 1942, was the driving force behind the bridge being built in the first place. I had the honour of being articled to Ross Gray and later was associated with him in the practice of law. From this association, both as a colleague in the practice of law and as a close personal friend, I learned a great deal about the trials and tribulations faced by Mr. Gray when he was endeavouring to convince the powers that be at the time of the need for just such a structure. I well remember the scrapbook that Mr. Gray had showing the various stages of construction and I could not help being amazed at the far-sightedness of Mr. Gray and the governments of that day which undertook a project of this magnitude.

• (1620)

The agreement entered into at that particular time stated, among other things, that when the bonds and debts of the bridge were retired, tolls would be discontinued. That agreement also made provision for payment to the village of Point Edward of \$5,000 in lieu of taxes each year. On June 1, 1961, the obligations of the commission were satisfied.

Going back in history to that particular period—I was practising law at that time and was solicitor for the council and have reason to know something about the facts—the then member for Lambton West, Mr. Walter Foy, and the hon. member for Lambton-Kent (Mr. McCutcheon), who was then the member and still is, jointly saw the need for establishing the Blue Water Bridge Authority and for making provision for payment of taxes to the village of Point Edward which would be commensurate with the holdings of the Blue Water Bridge Authority.

The minister of transport of that day, in moving second reading of Bill S-4 asked the former member for Lambton West, who was intimately acquainted with the situation, to explain the bill and the reasons for it. I think it is to the credit of these two men, one from each party, that they worked together to the advantage of the area. I think it was a tribute to the former member for Lambton West, Mr. Foy, that he was selected by the then minister of transport to introduce the bill because of his familiarity with the subject.

The hon. member for Lambton West knew that the village of Point Edward was being shortchanged because it was no longer receiving revenue either from government grants or from assessment and, in addition to this both he and the member for Lambton-Kent recognized