

Seaway and Canal Tolls

something about the tie-up of grain in western Canada. It is hard to explain why in 1966 a nation with a \$2 billion industry cannot move its grain to the ports.

• (4:20 p.m.)

When farmers, under a quota, can only market a bushel of wheat per acre for several months, how can they pay their costs of production on time? This only adds to their cost of production. This was an important matter but the government did nothing. The government set up a commission but it did nothing for month after month while wheat was piled up on the western farms as it was in 1956 and 1957. During that time the government did nothing but talk and say that the matter was under consideration, an old, worn-out phrase used by cabinet ministers who are not doing anything. It is only their way of passing the buck.

It seems to me that the C.P.R. of late is almost governing this country. It has an obligation to move the wheat. It was given a charter in most of western Canada, particularly in southern Alberta where it has a monopoly. But the C.P.R. made excuses. It said it had cars in the United States moving other commodities. It should have been moving wheat, the main export of western Canada, which is capable of bringing \$200 million into the economy of that region and this in turn is reflected throughout the whole economy of the country.

The recent increase in the profits of Massey-Ferguson and other firms has resulted from the fact that farmers have had to enlarge their production units in order to continue operating and in enlarging them they have had to buy bigger machinery. As a result the money they received for their grain went to the industrial centres of Ontario.

This is a national matter because the production of wheat and the prosperity of the wheat grower are still of primary concern to the country. It is not a regional question or a matter of selfishness. We are becoming an industrialized nation but behind the scenes wheat is still our major commodity and when there is prosperity on the wheat farm it is reflected throughout the whole Canadian economy.

I have dealt with the two main points I intended to cover. I hope that when this matter comes before the government it will take definite action. I hope it will make a decision and follow the suggestion of the hon.

[Mr. Woolliams.]

member for Hamilton West and other backbenchers on that side of the house who believe there should be no increase in tolls.

As the hon. member for Hamilton West said, it is not only the grain industry which will be affected. All industries and commodities will be affected and as a result the cost of living. This is one place where the government can say no. The St. Lawrence seaway system is a national project. It was built for all Canadians and the greater part of the cost should not be placed on the wheat producers.

Therefore I say, let us not have any more answers of this type. If the government is not going to do anything, let it say so. If we did not have this debate today it would be too late tomorrow or the next day. Thanks to members from western and eastern Canada, this matter has been brought up before parliament. Now it is up to the government to do its job. We have done ours.

Mr. R. K. Andras (Port Arthur): Mr. Speaker, any member from Port Arthur, which constituency contains the western terminal of the St. Lawrence seaway system, would be missing a real opportunity if he did not add his voice to the opposition against any suggestion of increasing tolls on the seaway. During the last month or so I have talked to many people in northwestern Ontario and many people west of Ontario and there is no doubt about the fact that they are in agreement in their opposition to this suggestion.

I should like to take this opportunity to deal with some of the arguments presented in favour of increases in the tolls and even the imposition of tolls. The first one is that tolls are required by the act of parliament which enabled us to build the seaway. It is the opinion of many competent people that this is not a correct statement of the law.

It is my understanding that section 15 of the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act authorizes but definitely does not require the seaway authority to impose tolls. Section 16 of the same act provides that if a decision is made to impose tolls the level of those tolls should be sufficient to effect the purposes mentioned in that section, which implies that the total cost should be recovered and, of course, this is fallacious.

As a matter of fact, on reviewing the act it would appear that the only place where it purports to make mandatory the imposition of tolls is under section 17 in the event of an agreement existing between Canada and the