

Niagara Falls Bridge

I can read the whole letter if any member wants me to. Those are pertinent questions, Mr. Chairman.

Another question was this:

In view of the statement made by the hon. member for Welland that he was assured the provincial government would protect the taxpayers, would I ascertain on what authority this statement was made?

The question was asked by an hon. member the other night, and I have not heard it answered yet. Another question was this:

If clause 8 in Bill No. 15, provided that no action could be taken by provincial authority until concurrent legislation was passed in New York state, and such legislation having been killed by the New York State Senate, could I find out why Bill No. 15 was being pushed through so rapidly, particularly before the postponed meeting of March 26 had been held?

There are many other inquiries of a similar nature which I have received in correspondence from taxpayers and home owners at Niagara Falls. Is it any wonder that I have to-day received one or two more letters asking whether I have found the Ethiopian in the woodpile.

I have felt it my duty to refer to the many insinuations and incorrect statements that have been made, and I should like the hon. member for Welland, before the bill passes, to clear up these incorrect statements, particularly the one that I blocked an expenditure of money. May I suggest further to the hon. member that he should observe the old axiom that "people in glass houses should not throw stones."

I want to give some more convincing evidence as to the amount of discussion that took place and may I again refer to that marvellous letter of 1,079 words to which reference has been made. I propose to put the whole letter on Hansard and then leave it to the committee to judge whether it is the sort of letter the hon. member represented it to be, that I was simply wanting to know whether the council and the corporation of Niagara Falls were satisfied with my actions. The letter is dated March 24, following receipt of most of these letters to which I have referred. The letter is addressed to the mayor and council of Niagara Falls, Ontario, and I am going to put it on Hansard so that the members of the committee may judge for themselves the inferences and references made here the other night:

I am enclosing a copy of Bill No. 15, which was considered again yesterday before the committee of railways and canals and telegraphs.

The bill was sent on to the House of Commons for consideration, contrary to the wishes

[Mr. Lockhart.]

of some members of the committee. Several minor amendments were made to the bill but the intent and purpose remain the same.

I was one of the members of the committee who were of the opinion that the bill should not have been hurried through, in view of press reports and other considerations involved. I have no apology for the stand I took, which I considered was in the best interests of the citizens of Niagara Falls, Ontario. I based my arguments on the reports in the St. Catharines "Standard" under dates of March 21 and March 22.

On the first mentioned date, March 21, the following appeared:

"A joint conference of the city council, the chamber of commerce and representatives of the International Railway Company and the National Parks Commission, with A. B. Damude, M.P., and Honourable W. L. Houck, will be held at Niagara Falls on March 26 to discuss the two proposals for bridges across the Niagara river. Both Mr. Damude and Hon. Mr. Houck have assured Niagara Falls city council, according to Mayor C. D. Hunniwell, that they will do everything possible in the event of government bridges built to see that the municipality does not lose taxation on the structure."

Let me supplement that by stating that there was a letter by the hon. member for Welland to the mayor of Niagara Falls on March 15, in which he said he would not "support a measure that will deprive your municipality of the assessment that you so urgently need." The minutes of the last meeting of council show that although the matter was discussed on four or five occasions, no such assurance had so far been given. I quote again from my letter of March 24:

The following article appeared in the St. Catharines "Standard" of March 22: "The city council of Niagara Falls approved a motion to be submitted to the Honourable W. L. Houck recommending that all properties acquired by the province or the Niagara parks commission and in use for highway purposes be subject to proper taxation. Alderman J. A. McAninch declared that the parks commission was using some of the city's most valuable property fronting on the river, and they might as well take over the entire city."

My inquiry of Mr. Damude while in committee was that if such a meeting was being held on March 26, and in view of other press reports I was of the opinion that the council of the city of Niagara Falls were not satisfied with the deliberations to date, and I was opposed to presenting any bill to parliament until the people's wishes in Niagara Falls had been met. Mr. Damude later explained to me that the meeting called for March 26 had no particular bearing on the decision to be arrived at by the committee, and was called for the purpose of giving some general information. He urged that the bill be sent on to parliament, and he was supported by the majority of the committee. Accordingly, the bill has been sent on to the House of Commons.

Having in mind the difficult position that the municipality of Niagara Falls, Ontario, has found itself in during the past few years, and having in mind that perhaps over \$10,000 per