

## IMPORTANCE OF THE WATERWAY IN NATIONAL DEFENCE

MR. Brooke Claxton, Minister of National Defence, speaking at Sault Ste. Marie on January 11, 1948 discussed the place of the St. Lawrence Waterways in our national defence.

Mr. Claxton recalled that, during the darkest days of the war, President Roosevelt and Mr. Mackenzie King worked out again an agreement for the construction of the St. Lawrence Waterways. "The project was advocated", Mr. Claxton continued," as a great contribution to the peaceful life and trade of this continent and it was planned as a definite line of communication for the defence of our continent.

"If it were desirable in 1941 that we should construct the waterways for purposes of transportation and for power, recent events have shown that it is even more desirable today; if it were desirable to proceed with the construction of the St. Lawrence Waterways for purposes of defence in 1941, nothing that has happened since has in any way diminished that need.

"In the interest of National Defence and International Security the St. Lawrence Waterways project should be started as soon as possible and pressed to completion.

### Urgent Priority

"General economic benefits, transportation and communication, power and iron-ore are reasons which give the completion of the St. Lawrence urgent priority in joint defence. Let us examine each of these.

1. The completion of the waterways system, like every other major development of transportation and power, would lead to the expansion of the civilian economy and any expansion in the industrial and economic potential which in peacetime leads to prosperity and a higher standard of living, also leads to an increased ability to arm ourselves for our own defence. Here in this home of steel, there is no need to remind you of what Hanson Baldwin said, that it was 'The factories of America, the industrial know-how of America and the mechanical competence of America . . . that won the war.'

2. In modern war the lines of communication stretch all the way from the battlefield to the factories and the full use of the St. Lawrence would bring resources of the interior of our continent closer to any possible fighting front; it would permit the more effective mobilization of the industrial potential of the continent; it would make possible the construction of all but the largest vessels in the industrial centres of the Great Lakes; it would provide a means of transportation alternative to the railways.

3. We saw in the last war how important an element was water power. You may remember how it led us in 1942 to build at Arvida a plant bigger than Boulder Dam in a little more than a year. The United States and Canada need the full power potential of the St. Lawrence now.

4. The completion of the waterways would make it possible for the great resources of iron ore in northern Quebec and Labrador to be made safely available to the smelters of Canada and the United States.