

*Tolls on Quebec Bridges*

to the same state of affairs that Mr. McTague and Mr. Lalande found in their investigations in 1943.

I will conclude by pointing out now that this is not an unimportant matter that I am raising. I know that fault will be found with me. I know that maybe this is not a particularly popular issue. But anyone who thinks he will scare me off by raising that sort of issue is wasting his time. I have taken up unpopular issues before now. If those who do not agree with me would read an editorial on this subject which appeared in the *Globe and Mail* of Friday, June 11, they would find that the editors agree largely with what I have pointed out in this house tonight. As a matter of fact, I am basing my case wholly on the report made by the commissioners to the Minister of Labour. The first paragraph in the *Globe and Mail* editorial reads as follows:

Canada is again in the throes of a lake seamen's strike. The issues are not the customary disputes over hours, wages and working conditions, but over the fact that five shipping companies have illegally refused to bargain with the accredited representatives of the Canadian seamen's union.

I can almost hear the statements that would be made in this house if—as I have heard them so many times before—if the trade unions had taken illegal action at this time. So let us now tell the people of Canada who are preventing a peaceful settlement of this dispute and who are the real culprits in the trouble and the rioting that have developed in this situation.

Mr. ALCIDE COTE (St. Johns-Iberville-Napierville): While the Minister of Transport (Mr. Chevrier) is in his seat, Mr. Speaker, I wish to clear up a point.

(Translation):

Mr. Speaker, I have made representations last year, in connection with the Victoria and Jacques Cartier bridges, in the province of Quebec. I had the support, at that time, of the hon. member for Chambly-Rouville (Mr. Pinard). The government of the province of Quebec is wholly responsible for its highways and, of course, has to pay for the cost of building and maintaining the bridges that are extensions of such highways. However, the Victoria and Jacques Cartier bridges were built and paid for by the federal government. When the toll system was applied generally to all main bridges in the province, whether they were considered provincial or federal bridges, the whole population was being treated equally. When in 1942 the Quebec government ruled to abolish the toll system in fairness to all provincial taxpayers, it should have eliminated the toll also on

[Mr. MacInnis.]

Victoria and Jacques Cartier bridges. Otherwise, there was this unfairness that one important region of the province kept on paying tolls whilst all others benefited from the abolition of the toll on the other bridges. That is why, as far back as 1942, the hon. Adélard Godbout, then premier of the province of Quebec, said he was ready to reimburse the federal government a reasonable amount if the toll was abolished on Victoria and Jacques Cartier bridges, the same as on other bridges of the province. However, after the negotiations were started, a new administration came to power and they were never resumed.

We must at this time take cognizance of the injustice of which I have just spoken, which consists in imposing double taxation upon one section of the population, to the other section's benefit, an injustice which has lasted from 1942 to this day.

Since then, the union of municipalities of the province of Quebec, of which I am a director, has expressly requested Premier Duplessis to meet the federal authorities with a view to solving this problem once and for all.

I am told, on the other hand, that the Quebec government have obtained permission from the federal authorities to use one of the two railway lines across the Quebec bridge for the purpose of widening the motor thoroughfare.

Last year, following representations made by myself and by the hon. member for Chambly-Rouville, the Minister of Transport declared himself willing to meet the representatives of the province of Quebec at any time to study the possibility of abolishing toll charges on Victoria and Jacques Cartier bridges. Unfortunately we are still at the same point today and this injustice has not yet been done away with.

That is why I am now asking the Minister of Transport the following questions:

First, since July 2, 1947, after my colleague and I had made representations to the hon. minister, and as a result of the latter's statement, has the government of the province of Quebec, through its premier, Mr. Duplessis, or a representative appointed by him, taken any action with a view to meeting the dominion government about the toll problem in connection with the Victoria and Jacques Cartier bridges?

Second, is the dominion government or the Minister of Transport always ready to meet the representatives of the Quebec government with a view to considering and eventually solv-