

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

farmers, because costs to western farmers would increase. That could be very detrimental to this country in the long run. Also, Canada really needs a comprehensive transportation system. Such a system alone will serve the interests of the whole nation.

The hon. member who rose before me on the "late show" was concerned about the structure of air rates. In this case we must be concerned about St. Lawrence Seaway rates. Indeed, we must be concerned as well about rail passenger, rail freight and air transportation rates. I believe, as I have said, that a comprehensive transportation policy for Canada is essential.

The Carr report, if implemented, would as I understand it provide for an increase of 27.6 per cent over five years. We need an assurance from the minister tonight that any increase will not become effective until there has been an opportunity for ample representation. An editorial in the *Standard*, published by St. Catharines Standard Limited, of August 27, 1971, stated that a decision has been made and that officials of the department are understood to be unimpressed with representations which have been made, which no doubt include the 49 representations to which I have referred.

I think it is most important for the minister to assure the House tonight that bureaucrats will not make the sort of decisions we have witnessed in the past, and that any decision to be made will be made by the minister and his department in consultation with those interested in and concerned about increases in St. Lawrence Seaway tolls. Those who are opposed to increases in St. Lawrence Seaway tolls wonder whether they will be heard and whether their representations will be taken into consideration before a final decision is made. I would appreciate the minister giving an assurance tonight to the western agricultural community and to users of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Welland Canal and the like, to the effect that there will not be an increase in tolls until those opposed have had an opportunity to make representations.

Our population is spread across the country and we know that it costs money to operate an efficient transportation system. We must not try to play off one form of transportation against another. We should not subsidize one form of transportation out of the public purse, as we have in the past, and then try to make the St. Lawrence Seaway pay for itself with regard to capital expenses. It is wrong to suggest that it should pay for itself in this respect. I would appreciate the minister advising the users of the St. Lawrence Seaway of his intentions.

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as was the case with the last submission, the hon. member will appreciate that the time limitation will

permit me to deal only superficially with his representations. So let me begin where he ended, with the assurance that he asked for. There is no intention whatever of making any changes in existing rate structures on the St. Lawrence Seaway until the thorough and exhaustive study that I have undertaken to make of the Carr report has been made. Of course, that exhaustive study involves the receipt of a large number of submissions from users and other interested parties. There will be this study, and any reports to the contrary are totally erroneous and can be disregarded.

• (10:20 p.m.)

Our activities at the present time are concerned primarily with our relations with the United States and the joint operation of the Seaway. In the emphasis that has been placed within Canada on the operations of the Seaway, in my judgment there has been a tendency to put too great an emphasis on one aspect, the possibility of an increase in tolls on the Canadian side or, if you like, unilaterally by Canada, and a failure—which I am surprised the hon. member has compounded tonight—to recognize that in the judgment of the Carr report the United States is by far getting the better of the deal. It is here that at the present time we are making our initial efforts.

I also commend to the hon. member something else with regard to the operating costs of the Seaway. I hope he will be equally vocal in this regard. The charges made by the Seaway only constitute a portion of the total cost of moving goods through the Seaway which is actually arrived at in terms of the user. I am not exactly sure of the precise portion or percentage.

I hope those who are making statements, including some who use the Seaway, will also recognize that it is incumbent upon them to keep their rates down and to reflect the same interest in the future of the Seaway as they expect the government to do. In other words, I do not want the government of Canada to be the patsy for this operation, the only one which is prepared to maintain this cost position in terms of charges despite rising costs, whereas shipping companies and sundry other users of the Seaway who have a much more profound effect of the costs of the western farmer are free to increase their rates.

In other words, we would like to hear, not merely why the St. Lawrence Seaway should not increase its rates but some kind of indication that the carriers and others are also prepared to co-operate in the interests of maintaining, as stated by the hon. member, one of the most important waterways and transportation links in this country.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.