

History of Negotiations

The recent history of Canada-United States negotiations begins about the end of the last century. It should be mentioned, however, that the piecemeal development of the St. Lawrence System began centuries ago and that important navigation improvements were being carried out on the Canadian side during most of the last century. In 1895, agitation for the improvement of inland waterways resulted in the appointment by Canada and the United States of Commissions of Inquiry, even before the completion by Canada of the 14-foot navigation system from Montreal to the Upper Lakes in 1900. In 1912, the Canadian Government decided to undertake the construction of a new Welland Canal (completed in 1932) which would eventually form an essential link in a projected deep water navigation route. Proposals for further joint Canada-United States consideration were cut short by the first World War, but were renewed after it and resulted in a decade of extensive studies and investigations during the 1920's. These, in turn, led to the signing by Canada and the United States of the St. Lawrence Deep Waterway Treaty in 1932. In 1934, this Treaty failed to receive the two-thirds affirmative vote in the United States Senate required for ratification. The subject was not completely dropped, however, and studies instituted a few years later finally led to the signing of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin Agreement on March 19, 1941. Since that time, various unsuccessful attempts have been made in the United States to secure Congressional approval for the Agreement.

Provisions of 1941 Agreement

The 1941 Agreement provides: (a) for the construction of the remaining links of a 27-foot waterway from the head of the Great Lakes to Montreal; (b) for a combined power-navigation scheme in the International Rapids Section of the St. Lawrence River, the power to be developed in a controlled, single-stage project with an installed capacity of 2,200,000 horsepower; (c) for the preservation of the scenic value of Niagara Falls, combined with the increased development of power at Niagara; (d) for stabilizing the situation regarding diversions of water from the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence System; and (e) for the use, for power purposes, of waters which may be diverted into the Great Lakes System from other watersheds, such use being granted to the country making the diversions.

Although the 1941 Agreement has never received the approval of the United States Congress and the Canadian Parliament, it can still be approved by these legislative bodies and brought into force by the exchange of ratifications.

It is unlikely that the Agreement will be approved in the exact terms in which it was originally signed. Measures introduced in the United States Congress in recent years, designed to give approval to the agreement, have contained certain important reservations and new suggestions.

Conditions Proposed

A measure introduced in the United States House of Representatives at the beginning of January, 1949, would give approval to the 1941 Agreement on condition that:

1. The Canadian Parliament would also approve the Agreement.