

*Seaway and Canal Tolls*

this legislation the department of immigration is relegated to third position. Almost as an after thought, responsibilities for immigration are included within the new department of manpower. Surely this is part of the entire problem we are facing today and is of some significance when we are thinking about the cost of production and the need for machinery, much of which is purchased today, even at inflated prices, in order to overcome the scarcity of labour in this country.

The Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Turner) referred to some of the statements which were made at the time the legislation governing part of the matter which is before us came before parliament in 1959. I would remind him that a great deal of what took place at that time was the result of the legacy passed on to us from the administration that preceded us. I cannot help but remember the glowing terms in which members of the party opposite during the election campaign at that time paraded before the public the benefits which would accrue not only to western Canada but to all of Canada with the construction of the seaway, proudly boasting and claiming as their right, part of the credit for the construction of the seaway in the first place. It is very strange indeed, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. gentleman should question part of that legacy which was passed on to the administration that followed.

I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Macaluso), the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. McNulty), the hon. member for Welland (Mr. Tolmie) and the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Andras) for the contributions they have made in this debate. I think they have welcomed this opportunity, despite what their front benches said during the initial stages when we were trying to establish the merits of having a debate at this time. They showed that they came well prepared to fight the battle. If the decision of the Chair served no other purpose, it gave these backbenchers on the government side an opportunity to voice their opinions where they could be heard, and where they could serve some useful purpose in regard to bringing this question not only to the attention of the cabinet but also to the attention of the country and the people of their own constituencies.

I have said before, and I want to reiterate, that the proposed 10 per cent increase in tolls is a very serious one, particularly as it affects the export trade of our country. Grain sales during the last several years have been one

[Mr. Nasserden.]

of the mainstays of our economy. All of us in western Canada have felt very downhearted at the reduction in the final payments for wheat during the past year. Hon. members in all parts of the house, whether or not they come from agricultural ridings, whether they are in business or in agriculture or just carry a dinner pail, cannot help but know something about what it means to chop off almost 15 per cent of the take-home pay which one has enjoyed in years previous. In view of a reduction of 13 to 17 cents per bushel, and being faced with the prospect of a further reduction which would almost cut in half the benefits brought about by the seaway when it first came into operation, the producers of grain in Canada cannot help but express their indignation and concern. In addition to this, Mr. Speaker, the grain producers are faced with tight money, higher interest rates and a high cost of living. This is reason enough for any parliament to concern itself with the problems before it.

I recommend to the cabinet the proposal put forward by one of the members from Halifax to amortize the capital costs of the seaway over a much greater period of time than is presently the case. The seaway has been in operation for only seven years, which is a mere drop in the bucket to the number of years we hope it will be in operation. I think with any business in the initial years of operation you must expect your returns will not be as great as they will be when the business is at full capacity. It is a fact that at the present time the seaway is operating at something less than two thirds full capacity. There is also the prospect that as the capacity is reached other avenues will open to increase the capacity of the seaway if traffic on the seaway so warrants. Those who brought forward the idea of an all-Canadian seaway were perhaps voicing something that will one day be a reality.

● (8:00 p.m.)

I do not think I can add anything else to the debate, but I should like the members on the treasury benches to give parliament an opportunity to discuss the decision reached in this matter before it is made final. I think this is an important matter that affects not only the cost of transportation, but the whole business cycle in our country, and also our trade with other nations. As such I feel that this matter deserves consideration by the cabinet and by parliament.