

SEAWAY AT HALF WAY MARK

Mr. Lionel Chevrier, President of the Privy Council and Minister responsible to Parliament for the St. Lawrence Seaway, declared May 23 that "a backward and forward look at the Seaway at the halfway mark gives reason to believe that the construction of the Seaway right now has in many ways turned out to have been a move forward in step with the times." Mr. Chevrier was guest speaker at the sixty-fourth annual meeting of the Canadian Life Insurance Officers Association held at the Seigniory Club, P.Q.

Emphasizing the above statement, Mr. Chevrier indicated that the conditions for building the Seaway have been exceptionally favourable, for it would be carried out without causing any dislocating effect on the economy, that the growth of the economy itself indicates that it is fully ready and capable of making full use of the Seaway and of the power development in connection with it and that business and industry have accepted its possibilities eagerly. Turning to the international level, the speaker pointed to the large area of the United States which appears ready to orient its trade toward the St. Lawrence route, not forgetting the new importance of Canadian iron ore for the Great Lakes steel industry, and to world trade conditions which have turned out to be more favourable than they have been for several decades. The speaker finally underlined our industrial progress having reached the point where the opportunities and inducements for using water transport were never higher.

Comparing the construction of the 27-foot seaway with the historical record of canal building in Canada, Mr. Chevrier pointed out that, in the past, canal building was prodigal of both time and labour and the costs were large in comparison with the resources available to meet them. Also the speed and perfection of modern construction techniques have the inevitable effect of minimizing the size of the job actually done. To take only one example, the total labour force of 16,000 used on all the aspects of the Seaway and Power projects is equivalent to less than 4 per cent of the industrial labour force of the Montreal area. Thirty years ago, a force of this size would have equalled more than 8 per cent of the Montreal labour force. However, because of construction methods and equipment then available, to gain some conception of how big the seaway project might have appeared to people at that time, one must conceive of a project today that would call for employment of some 120,000 men.

MEASURES ECONOMY GROWTH

"The significant thing about this," commented the speaker, "is the way it measures the growth of the Canadian economy. Our economy is

experiencing an unprecedented rate of new capital investment at the present time, of which the Seaway is only a small part. No major projects have had to be deferred because of any drain on manpower or materials caused by the Seaway. The Seaway, which in the past often appeared outside, both as an undertaking and as a capital asset after completion, through the remarkable growth of our economy during the post-war period promises within a very short time, if not almost immediately, to be entirely absorbed into the economic life of Canada and the United States."

The speaker then commented on the eager response of business and industry to Seaway possibilities. It appears that no one will have to "sell" the Seaway to prospective users. "We are not faced," added Mr. Chevrier, "with a hesitant, wait-and-see attitude, but with planning and action on every hand--by industries, shipping concerns, port authorities and the like."

Turning to the interest and enthusiasm shown in the United States for the Seaway, the speaker noted that this interest seems today very broadly based and expressed his conviction that the states bordering on the Great Lakes, are regarding the Seaway as their own particular "Gateway to the Sea." "I need not emphasize to you," continued the speaker, "the long-run importance to Canada of this new northward-looking stance of the American Middle West. For whatever the service via the Seaway that is in time provided at Cleveland or Detroit or Chicago, it is bound to be as good or better at intermediate Canadian ports such as Hamilton, Toronto and Montreal."

FOREIGN TRADE SHIPPING

Discussing the world trade, Mr. Chevrier stressed the phenomenal expansion in the volume of world trade, indicating that it is now possible to think of a volume of international trade using the Seaway that would have been inconceivable only a few years ago. Symptomatic of this healthy condition of world trade is the inauguration of direct trade shipping between Great Lakes ports and overseas in 1945. In 1956, 15 different lines were participating in this trade, using 94 ships and making 309 trips. Further expansion is certain with some 19 lines, for this year, using approximately 130 vessels and making more than 400 trips. This expansion can only grow with the opening of the Seaway, when world trade can operate larger and therefore relatively less expensive vessels.

Mr. Chevrier concluded with some remarks on the changing role of water transportation generally in our economic life. In his opinion, water transport today is feeling the direct effects of industrial expansion on this continent. The volume of raw materials and finish-