

Seaway and Canal Tolls

Well, what would have happened had it not been for this debate, and it may happen yet because this government does not pay too much attention to the wishes of parliament, is that after whatever recommendations are made following the hearing the government would simply have gone ahead by order in council and imposed this extra load on industry in general and on western agriculturalists. It was obvious that the recommendation by the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority was going to be to increase tolls. This will impose a burden on industrial concerns that are striving to keep costs down, but they cannot do it in the face of action such as this.

I mentioned a letter. Can you imagine a letter being sent to these firms in Canada advising them as follows:

Take greater care to assure that export sales efforts and export orders receive suitable priorities, even in the face of high domestic demand.

Make greater effort to bring home overseas earnings of affiliates not needed in the conduct of their business.

Make careful scrutiny of direct investment plans and postponement of those which are marginal even though permitted within the program formula.

Make continued effort to borrow abroad to meet foreign investment needs where this is possible and feasible.

Make continued effort to bring home any short term financial assets which are not reasonably needed for the conduct of business in other countries.

Make greater use of American flag vessels and air lines.

What is this? The Secretary of Commerce of the United States sends a letter like this to Canadian corporations with United States parentage. Finally, they are advised, where practical, to hold company meetings in the United States rather than abroad. These revelations are to be found in the Nash article to which I made reference. If you ask this government what they are going to do, you get the stock answer that this matter is receiving the most careful and continuing consideration. One does not have to be bilingual to understand what that means. It simply means that nothing is going to be done. I feel that what is happening here in connection with the toll problem is just one more facet of the whole situation.

I should like to know whether or not there was any secret agreement with the United States in connection with this matter. We know that there was an agreement entered into by the former minister of finance, the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Gordon), and apparently followed by his successor,

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

which places on the Canadian consumer added costs in order to assist the United States in meeting its balance of payments problem. We will have a deficit of \$1½ billion or more this year. If the United States had the same ratio of deficit instead of the deficit it has it would run to \$20 billion or more.

I spoke in Montreal to the conference of American editors and newspapermen. I thought it was a fine thing for them to have their meeting in Canada. They listened to the arguments which were advanced and a number of them said to me after I had spoken: These are things about which we do not know. Nothing has been said about the economic situation in Canada. It is time for parliament to speak out. When I was in office I was condemned as anti-American because I dared to say that Canadian policies were to be made in Canada by Canadians. This has been Conservative policy throughout the years and it is the only policy that will preserve the independence of this country.

I resent action being taken by the Secretary of Commerce of the United States in writing such a letter to Canadians, for that is what these corporations are. We welcome foreign investment but we do not want immigrants with capital coming into our country who intend to follow the laws or even regard the laws of the land whence they came.

In so far as the motion today is concerned, I feel that the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority should know that we stand opposed to any increase in tolls. There has not been very much said to the contrary. This increase could only detrimentally affect Canada and will affect the United States but little. If perchance the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority has already made its decision even while hearing representations, and one does not have to be suspicious to come to that conclusion after the statement made by one of its members in Winnipeg, then the government of Canada should know what is expected of it. It is for this reason that I expected more ministers would have been here on a matter affecting the economy of this country in addition to the minister of manpower, the Associate Minister of National Defence (Mr. Cadieux) and, above all, the Minister of Forestry (Mr. Sauvé). I compliment them for being present, but where are the ministers who deal particularly with the economy? They were here for the orders of the day but have not been here since.