

St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act

Mr. Hees: I think it would be much simpler if the hon. member had the extra time, because he is asking a lot of important questions and it would be easier if I answered them as he went along. I am sure the hon. member is asking these questions in an endeavour to seek information.

Mr. Winch: Yes, I am. The only thing is that I want to keep my continuity, if I can.

Mr. Hees: It depends on whether the hon. member wants to make a speech or is asking for information. I am willing to give him the information, as best I can, as he goes along.

Mr. Winch: I would like to do both, but go ahead and answer.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Chairman, the basis upon which these claims are being examined is this. This was explained very carefully to the contractors, and they have all agreed it is a fair basis for examination. If it can be shown by them to those examining these claims in the St. Lawrence seaway that they lost money due to change of plans which the seaway authority imposed upon them, or to any hold-ups imposed upon them in time by the St. Lawrence seaway engineers, or if in any way losses which they incurred were due to action of the seaway authority and their engineers, then those losses would be given very serious consideration with regard to compensation. We would compensate to the degree, and to the exact degree, to which we estimate our actions, or lack of action, or wrong action, have contributed to that loss. If, however, losses have been incurred due to mistakes made by the contractors themselves, and which we do not consider we are responsible for, then those losses must be borne by the contractors. That basis of examination has been considered by all the contractors I have come into contact with to be eminently fair. They are satisfied with that basis of examination, and they have told me they are satisfied with those who are doing the examining, and I believe that they feel they are being given a square deal.

Mr. Winch: Mr. Chairman, that is admittedly fair; I am not criticizing that at all. What I am saying is that the members of this house and the people of Canada should know if we find we have to go ahead and pay out additional millions—you have already agreed to over \$700,000—why this is so. Is it because, as it must be, of mistakes made in planning and engineering? If so, is that not money which has been wasted because of something wrong in the planning and engineering in some phase or other? That is what we are asking. Just why did that situation occur, and can we know whether, when we are asked

[Mr. Winch.]

to spend an additional \$35 million, that situation will be corrected and will not happen again?

Mr. Hees: If I might answer that question as we go along, as I am sure the hon. member noted yesterday—

Mr. Argue: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Chairman, I am glad to give the information to the hon. member as we go along.

Mr. Argue: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order I think it is clear to the minister and the members of the committee that the speech of any member can be interrupted only with the member's consent. I would suggest to the minister that if he wishes to interrupt the speech being made by the hon. member for Vancouver East, he should first of all ask his permission. If he receives his permission the minister can proceed; but it is clear under the rules that the minister has no right to interrupt any member who is speaking.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Chairman, may I just say this. I have no intention of interrupting anybody's speech, but the hon. member is putting to me very serious questions. I understand that he is not putting them forward for propaganda or political purposes, but to elicit information, and I want to give him that information if I can, because I am sure that is the only reason he is asking these questions. Now, does the hon. member want an answer to his questions, or does he simply want to carry on and make charges?

Mr. Winch: I was just going to make the remark that the hon. minister and I get along very well, but now I do not know that I can say that, because he said that unless I proceed in the way he suggests I am merely being political. I am glad the hon. minister accepts the sincerity and integrity with which I am trying to put up these questions, but it is very difficult for me to carry on on a question and answer basis at this stage. It is customary in the majority of cases, the minister believing in the integrity and sincerity of the person speaking, for the minister to make note of the points raised and the questions asked, and then when the speaker is through and the minister gets up he deals with each speaker, his questions and points of view. I would ask that that procedure be followed from now on, if the minister does not mind.

Having, I hope, made the point I was trying to make, I would like to go to the next one, which I think follows in a natural sequence. It is something which I admit I have found somewhat difficult to understand. Here we have a project which is now going to cost