

Seaway and Canal Tolls

sitting like a jewel on the St. Lawrence waterway in the midst of that great industrial complex of this nation. I am sure you are taking more than a passing interest in this debate.

Listening to the Acting Minister of Transport (Mr. Turner) this afternoon, I could not help but feel that I should congratulate him upon his acting. He was at his very best, in spite of the poor case he had to present. The members of this house witnessed a spectacle this afternoon that has been seen in this house with recurring frequency over the past three years, namely a government coming to the house without a national policy with regard to the important problem of transportation. The Minister without Portfolio told us, if he told us nothing else, that the government does not have a national transportation policy to offer parliament or the country at this time. Despite the fact they have been in power for three years, despite the fact that they came into office boasting that they were well prepared and the pigeon-holes were filled with plans to put this country back on the rails, we have no transportation policy. It is significant that at this time we should have from the Minister without Portfolio this admission of the failure of the present government to deal with this important matter.

One could almost think of that phrase, I do not recall whether it was decision or indecision, but I know that hon. gentlemen opposite know to what I am referring, as they have had reason to think back about the stand they took in that regard in the past. I was interested in noticing that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) has not graced us with his presence in this debate. Perhaps he has a good reason for being absent, and I would not want to do him an injustice. However, there is no more important matter that could come to the attention of the Minister of Finance than the one which is before us today. I contend, sir, that an increase in tolls of the order of 10 per cent could very well affect the balance of payments position with the United States. When I say that, I am not referring to the effect on grain growers but I am referring to the movement of iron ore to the United States of America. This is one of the reasons that I believe the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Winters) should have been here to deal with this particular matter.

Canada is emerging today as an industrial nation. There is no factor more important than exports, to the growing industries of our

country, but to hear the Minister without Portfolio and the Minister of Public Works (Mr. McIlraith) as they sought to deny this debate—

Mr. McIlraith: No, Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. That is a misstatement of my position. What I sought to do today was to prevent the regular business of the house being taken up this afternoon on this matter, which could have waited to be discussed on interim supply, or the appropriate place.

• (7:50 p.m.)

Mr. Nasserden: All that the Minister of Public Works has done is to strengthen the argument that not only we in this party but those in other parties on this side of the house have maintained today. The minister sought to deny the House of Commons the opportunity to discuss—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot allow the hon. member to continue this trend of thought. There is a motion before the house. A ruling was made by the Chair and the hon. member has no right to go behind the ruling and argue the question all over again.

Mr. Nasserden: I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker; I was just trying to answer the Minister of Public Works and I will not pursue the matter, I assure you.

We in western Canada are interested in the price of steel, of iron ore and of farm machinery which we purchase in Canada or from the United States of America. We buy a lot of farm machinery and production machinery not only in western Canada but in eastern Canada. To listen to ministers of the crown refer to a 10 per cent increase in such a cavalier manner as has been the case today of one of the factors which enter into the cost of production cannot help but make us question seriously whether they have read the budget presented by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) a few weeks ago, in which he drew attention to the important problems facing this country with regard to the cost of living, the costs of production and also the balance of payment problem with our friends to the south of us.

One of the most important factors in the production of grain in western Canada is the cost of farm machinery. Another important factor is the availability of men and women for work on farms in Canada. Only yesterday we had the spectacle of the government bringing forward a measure which would reorganize the departments of government. In