

St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act

that it will take six years to build the St. Lawrence seaway. It took twenty years to build Panama; it took more than ten years to build Welland. Yet here we were asked to build the St. Lawrence seaway in four years. That limit was fixed by a major consideration over which we had no control, namely that by agreement between Canada and the United States power had to be ready for development by July 1, 1958. As a result there remained only four full construction seasons in which to do the work.

How then could it be otherwise than that there was some haste? There were probably some delays and it may well be that there were other considerations with which I am not conversant. On the whole I repeat that in my opinion the work was executed in an efficient and workmanlike manner, and Canada was fortunate to have the kind of contractors it did to do the work.

Are the contractors entitled to their claims? That is a different thing altogether. That is a matter concerning which I am not competent to pass an opinion other than the one I expressed a moment ago when I said that in effect we in the seaway authority were bound by the contract and being bound by that contract had to determine claims in the terms of the contract. However, we took the position then as the minister is taking today, on the advice I am sure of the St. Lawrence seaway authority as it has been recomposed in the years since I left, that the determination of this matter was one of government policy and not something for the St. Lawrence seaway authority.

I think the minister has adopted the right course in bringing into the picture two independent engineers who have had experience with the hydro electric power commission of Ontario, and who certainly cannot be accused of being sympathetic to those who live in the downstream areas, in order to ascertain whether or not these claims are valid. After these two men have reported on these claims seriatim it will then be up to the seaway authority to decide whether in effect some of these claims can be accepted and whether some must be rejected. Then, finally, the governor in council, the present government, will have to decide in its wisdom whether or not these claims are valid. I thought I should place these facts on the record in so far as I personally was concerned.

I should like to conclude by again thanking the committee for its consideration of what I have had to say. I say that the seaway as it will emerge in 1959 will be a different seaway from that envisaged in 1951. In the first place, it was not built on Canadian territory as envisaged when the estimate was tabled in

1951. It was built partly in United States territory and partly in Canadian territory in the international section. In the next place, it was not put on the Montreal side of the St. Lawrence river as envisaged in 1951 but rather on the south shore on the St. Lambert side of the river. Placing the seaway on the south shore in that section necessitated modifications to three bridges which cross from the south shore to the island of Montreal, and let me tell hon. members that 75,000 cars per day cross these three bridges.

How could you instal lift spans in these bridges with 60 lockages going through the canal per day? You would tie up motor cars for miles and miles. There would be a public outcry to the situation. Nothing else could be done under the circumstances than to treat the people of Montreal fairly in the manner in which we did and modify the approaches to the Jacques Cartier bridge, which cost in the neighbourhood of \$10 million, the approaches to the Victoria bridge which, as I stated earlier, could go well beyond the anticipated amount of \$6 million, and the approaches to the Mercier bridge which will cost in the neighbourhood of \$10 million. Neither the seaway authority nor the government of Canada could decently have provided anything less in the way of transportation facilities for the city of Montreal than was provided. If the present government had been in office it would, in my estimation, have done exactly as we did because if their members had said to them as our members said to us, you cannot for one moment interrupt highway traffic on these three bridges because there will be chaos in the metropolitan area of Montreal, they would have come to no other conclusion than to do as we did. I submit with deference to the committee that the increased expenses were warranted and that they will enure to the benefit of Canada.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Mr. Chairman, the fury we have witnessed in the committee for the last 55 minutes reminds me of one thing only and Shakespeare said it best in Hamlet: "Methinks the lady doth protest too much". For, sir, not all the fury, not all the glibness, not all the skilful eloquence of my hon. and learned friend, the counsel for the defence from Laurier, not all these things can obscure the essential facts which were presented to the committee today. The cost of the Welland ship canal was estimated by the former government, estimated by the hon. member for Laurier, first at \$1,157,000, then \$1,302,000 and then \$2 million. What did it cost? It is costing between \$25 million and \$29 million. Did the hon. gentleman in anything he said tonight try to justify that? No, he tried simply to obscure the issue.