

*Seaway and Canal Tolls*

● (7:40 p.m.)

If canal tolls are imposed, every one of the 200,000 or 300,000 grain producers on the prairies will have to accept lower prices for his wheat and other grains exported. Let us review very briefly the history of water transportation with respect to tolls. In 1904 Sir Wilfrid Laurier stated that if tolls were imposed they would be an additional burden on the grain growers of the west. This was interpreted as favouritism to the west, although it really was an effort to lessen the charges on the movement of wheat from Fort William and Port Arthur to Montreal, destined for the markets of the world. When George P. Graham was minister of railways and canals, he stated:

It cannot be denied that every dollar you impose in tolls must come out of the produce or the cargo. There is no other way to pay for it.

I wish to quote again from the MacPherson report on transportation, volume 2, page 195:

We would not wish, in other words, to encourage the Canadian public to believe that a country such as ours can expect to obtain the kind of transport facilities, designed to fulfil national policy objectives that transcend commercial consideration, without a continuing outlay of public funds of a considerable order of magnitude.

The seaway between Montreal and lake Ontario is the only section of over 27,000 miles of navigable waterways in North America upon which tolls are levied. If the St. Lawrence seaway is to achieve its proper status as Canada's sole means of access by water to her heartland, it must not be impeded by a crippling toll structure. Similarly the Welland ship canal, located in the very heart of Canada's major industrial zone, must be permitted to function without the obstacles of tolls.

I wish to impress upon hon. members once again the fact that low cost water transportation is essential to the continued progress and prosperity of Canada. Not only does it increase the movement of primary and manufactured goods from one part of the country to the other, but it also assists the sale of Canadian wheat and other exports in the highly competitive overseas market.

In further substantiation of my argument against the imposition of tolls, Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer to a statement made by the three western grain pools, and I quote:

Another reason why farmers oppose seaway tolls is because the toll structure seeks to recover capital investment and this the farmers do not think is desirable for a publicly-owned transportation utility. Farmers do not find justification for the recovery of capital investment from seaway

[Mr. Forbes.]

users by a government which through the years has made many kinds of public investment in transportation facilities without there being any direct obligation for the users to repay the investment. Consider, for example, the following list of public investment in transportation which was compiled by Mr. Justice W. F. A. Turgeon when he was chairman of a 1951 royal commission on transportation. The list included:

(i) The construction of the National Transcontinental Railway to encourage the shipment of goods through Canadian ports;

(ii) The construction in central Canada of an extensive canal system which became toll free, built at a cost of about \$328 millions and maintained at government expense;

(iii) The granting of substantial areas of land and subsidies to encourage and assist railway construction and the opening up of the country.

(iv) The taking over by the country in the years between 1918-23 of the bankrupt railway lines and the welding of them along with government lines into the Canadian National Railway system;

(v) The construction of Hudson Bay Railway and the development of the port of Churchill;

(vi) The subsidization of coastal shipping services and large investments in harbors and other navigation facilities; and

(vii) The large investment in and operation of Trans-Canada Air Lines and assistance given to other air lines.

The learned jurist said this government activity in the transportation industry indicates "the continuous concern of parliament with Canada's transportation problems including the problem inherent in great distances and sparse population." The wheat pools do not believe the government sought recovery of its investment from the users in the previous instances and cannot support the attempt to recover Seaway investment through user tolls.

I am firmly convinced that any increase in tolls will be detrimental to the expansion of our international trade and should not be allowed.

**Mr. E. Nasserden (Rosthern):** First of all, Mr. Speaker, I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Kindersley (Mr. Cantelon) on bringing forward this motion today. During the three years he has been in the house he has become recognized, not only as a specialist on pension problems but also on transportation problems, so it is very fitting he should be bringing forward this motion today. The hon. member who preceded me in the debate, the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Forbes), has been in the house for a considerable time. He has won four consecutive general elections with good majorities, and all of us have a tremendous appreciation of his work on behalf of the people in agriculture. I congratulate him for seconding this motion.

When I look at you, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but think of the great city of Cornwall,