

harbour. I have in my hand a report of the Harbour Commissioners which shows the charge for the interest upon that \$3,000,000 has been paid to the City of Saint John.

I notice from the press that negotiations are going on at the present time with regard to the deepening of the St. Lawrence waterway. That is a big question, and I do not intend to do more at present than discuss it briefly, and only in so far as it relates to the port of Saint John. My understanding of the matter is that from the United States' point of view the main object of that great work, which probably will be undertaken within a reasonably short time, is to provide a cheap outlet for the Middle West down through Canadian territory by water during the summer or the period of navigation. In other words, they want and probably will establish a neutral zone through which they can ship their goods cheaply from the Middle West to the Atlantic ocean. If such a summer outlet is important to the United States, why is it not equally important that Canada should have an outlet in the winter, when the St. Lawrence is frozen over?

I wonder how many people in this part of the country who like a good John Collins know that if they import gin and it arrives at Saint John it cannot be shipped direct from there over the Canadian Pacific Railway without going through a narrow neck of land that was ceded to the United States by the Ashburton Treaty. How many honourable members are aware that if they were travelling from Saint John to Ottawa, for example, part of their train would be sealed up on reaching Vanceboro, Maine, and kept sealed until re-arrival at the Canadian boundary? Any person who eats on the dining car while that train is on American territory has to pay a duty on his meal to the United States Government. The baggage of a person who is travelling from Montreal to Saint John is likely to be inspected when the train crosses the border. During part of the war a soldier travelling to or from Saint John over this line had to hide his uniform under the seat while he passed through the American zone.

I have a suggestion to make. I presume that if the negotiations now under way for the development of the St. Lawrence river are completed, there will be a treaty or agreement between this country and the United States. If a neutral zone is established for an American summer route through the St. Lawrence, why should not a neutral zone for Canada be provided through the State of Maine to the port of Saint John in the winter time?

Hon. Mr. COPP: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. FOSTER.

Hon. Mr. FOSTER: I urge that that suggestion be taken into consideration by the Government of our country when the agreement or treaty is under consideration.

Honourable members are aware that from time to time discussion arises on our system of managing harbours by local commissions. It has been stated that the policy of the present Government is to centralize the management by the appointment of one commission for all harbours, or to have the administration done by a federal department. As one who has had some experience I am forced to the conclusion that the present system, notwithstanding its weaknesses, is about the best that has yet been devised. One of its drawbacks is that politics is bound to creep in to some extent. But that is not always the fault of the commission. Perhaps I should not say so, but I think I was fairly successful in keeping the Saint John Commission free of politics. In any event, political influence usually is not the fault of the commission; it is due to local political organizations forcing their views upon the chairman and members of the commission and often succeeding in having their way. On the other hand, the present system has much to commend it. For one thing, a local commission considers it a matter of pride to build up the business of the harbour in competition with foreign ports. It is familiar with conditions, in a way that a centralized body could not be, and it will fix tolls that are calculated to attract business, it will carry on a good advertising campaign, and do everything possible to make the harbour attractive to shipping. Those of us who were privileged to view the port of Montreal, at the invitation of an honourable member of this House, must have been impressed by the great work that has been carried on there by the successive harbour commissions. It was obvious that a great amount of knowledge, study and time had been expended to bring that vast undertaking to its present state of efficiency.

I should like to make one or two observations by way of showing that the Harbour Commission of Saint John, as a local body, has justified itself. One of the duties of harbour commissioners is to study all the movements of traffic in the country, bearing in mind that the success of the port depends upon the business that is moved through it. When making such a study I found nothing more helpful than the report made in 1922 by a committee of this honourable body, which investigated the question of the diversion of Canadian traffic through Canadian Atlantic ports. That committee made three recom-