

Seaway and Canal Tolls

Second, Mr. Speaker, there are substantial wheat and flour shipments from Halifax and Saint John. Of course most of this grain comes to us through the St. Lawrence seaway. So on the one side there is the problem of a fear by maritimers that the St. Lawrence seaway is draining us, and on the other side there are some very substantial economic reasons why we should support the ideas of all members who have taken part in the debate so far.

Complicating the problem still further from our standpoint is the delay in bringing in a new Railway Act. We in Atlantic Canada are therefore in the dark whether the subvention system will be continued and whether, if continued, it will be of such a size as to be of assistance to us. Finally, in summing up the problems that are running through the head of this particular maritimer I would refer to the fact that we do not want to appear to be parochial or regional in the opinions we present. We do not want all the advantages on our side. We have come here over a long period of time and made requests for help from other parts of Canada and have been accorded reasonably generous treatment. Therefore, as I say, we do not wish to appear always as suppliants forever asking but never willing to budge an inch from our own particular position.

My suggestion, therefore, is twofold: first, that the authority decide at this time to hold the line on the tolls and not increase them. After all, the amount of debt outstanding on the St. Lawrence seaway development is like a mortgage which really can never be paid off; it continues on and on. So that for the present my suggestion—I presume the authority will be reading today's *Hansard* to get the views of members of parliament—is to hold the line on the tolls. But I would suggest that the authority review them again after we have had a new Railway Act before us and have passed it.

● (4:50 p.m.)

I would also make the suggestion that the whole problem is bedevilled because we have not have spelled out in this country a transportation policy covering seaway, railway and other operations which have application to the economic problems involved here. Until the government grasps this many-sided nettle and comes up with a transportation policy, so necessary to Canada today, I believe that problems such as tolls on the St. Lawrence seaway will continue to cause trouble. I suggest, sir, that if the government

[Mr. McCleave.]

comes up with a transportation policy dealing with the St. Lawrence seaway, the railways and the air lines, it should spell out for all parts of Canada something positive which will not set different parts of the country at loggerheads with each other.

In taking part in this debate today I suppose I was motivated by foolhardy courage. In brief, my suggestion is to hold the line on tolls until the new Railway Act is approved and until a transportation policy is developed by the government.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I want to say at once that the speech made by the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. McCleave) to which this house has just listened is a tribute to his membership and to those qualities which it is so necessary for members of parliament to possess, namely, a desire to be co-operative, to bring together all parts of Canada and to do nothing that will be harmful to any one part of Canada, showing thereby in our policies and actions that whatever we support shall be for Canada as a whole.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I compliment him, and I know his views are shared by the other member for Halifax (Mr. Forrestall) who has expressed similar views which have certainly merited the consideration of the house.

Having said that, I now want to deal in general with the matter before us. I congratulate the hon. member for Kindersley (Mr. Cantelon) for moving this motion. It was necessary, it was timely and I think the discussion has been most beneficial to all of us.

I am rather surprised that there are not more ministers in the house on a matter of such importance to Canada. The presence of only three ministers shows a lack of regard for the seriousness of this problem which I feel should have made their presence in the house obligatory.

I now want to refer in general to the circumstances connected with this matter. It goes back quite a while. The hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) brought this matter to the attention of the house in February and asked what action was going to be taken. Since then various members have asked the same question but have received no information. On March 24 I raised the question, and the answer of the Minister of