

St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act

bureau made in the public accounts committee. That is the reason I have spent so much time in showing what happens to estimates. Estimates are prepared, estimates are revised, estimates are re-revised, estimates are still further revised by other governments. If you take this history of these estimates you will find that they are normal. If you take them at the time they were made, with the exception, of course, of the Welland canal one, I believe you will find that there is a gradual increase as they have been revised from time to time; provided, of course, that you do not add large projects that have to be carried out because of public demand. I have not dealt with those and I am not going to impose that discussion on the committee, but I hope at a later date to be able to give the reasons why, beginning with upstream and going right down to Montreal, it was necessary to add many of the things that were done at the time.

I would like to make some remarks on the contractors' claims but I am not going to impose on the committee any longer. The hon. member for Vancouver East has been waiting to speak and, if the committee will permit me, perhaps I might be allowed to listen to what he has to say and to others and then at a later time, before the resolution is finally approved, give my opinion of these claims that have been filed by the contractors. If that meets with the wishes of the committee, I would appreciate it a great deal if I could be given the opportunity to intervene in the debate at a later time.

Mr. Winch: Mr. Chairman, I listened very carefully to the remarks made yesterday afternoon by the hon. member who has just taken his seat. As I say, I listened very carefully, because this is a most important subject.

I cannot help commenting from my own point of view that I wish that on such an important subject with all its complexities it were possible to present the entire picture with all its complexities in terminology that would make it a little more understandable to the average layman. I will admit, that neither inside nor outside of this chamber have I ever previously spoken about the St. Lawrence seaway. However, I became exceedingly interested in the matter because of reports and comments in the press of this country, certain documents that were placed in my possession and meetings with several persons of engineering status.

I want to say right at the outset that I became most interested because of certain documents which were placed in my possession and which engineers informed me were correct. However, I have not used them and do not intend to use them because they are

not authenticated by signature. Having regard to my responsibility as a member of this house I feel that I cannot, in speaking now or at any other time, use documents which I have not had officially authenticated as to their source. However, in view of the statement made yesterday afternoon by the Minister of Transport in moving this motion, and the complete answers that were given by the minister to a series of questions placed upon the order paper, I feel that there are questions of serious import that should be asked of the minister at this time before this motion is finally proceeded with.

May I at this time say, how much I appreciate the speed with which the Minister of Transport replied to the questions placed on the order paper. He has set a wonderful precedent and example. We hope that the other cabinet ministers will take note and will follow in his footsteps.

The hon. member who preceded me had a good deal to say—and I tried to follow his remarks as far as I could—about the increased costs of the St. Lawrence seaway. But irrespective of what he said I feel that, when we have the Minister of Transport informing the house, as he did yesterday, that the cost to Canada of the seaway was estimated in 1955 in the capital budget as \$205,500,000 as compared with the present total estimated expenditure of \$329 million, it can be taken almost as axiomatic that, it is the responsibility of hon. members, when he asks for an additional \$35 million, to find out as precisely as we possibly can the reason for the increase from \$205 million to \$329 million, how the money was spent, whether it was efficiently spent and what is the purpose of the additional \$35 million that is being asked for on this occasion.

I think one point we should like to be clear upon is whether this \$35 million has any connection with the 28 claims that have been put forward by the contractors up until January 27 of this year. The minister informed us that 28 claims had been received totalling \$36,329,000, that six of those claims had been dealt with and that the remainder are being examined at the present time. He also informed the house that the six claims that have been dealt with thus far totalling \$8,636,000; and that of that amount claims totalling \$768,000 have been accepted and \$7,868,000 have been rejected.

It is, of course, of interest—because the members of the house want to be absolutely fair in all their dealings—as to whether or not there was any justification for the claims that have been put in by the 28 companies. On that basis I should like to ask in passing whether the Minister of Transport has had