

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS.
SUPPLEMENTARY PAPER
No 53/17

WHAT DOES THE GREAT LAKES - ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY

An address by the Minister of Transport, Mr. Lionel Chevrier, delivered at the Second Heartland Conference, sponsored by the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Association, at Washington, D.C., April 30, 1953.

....The peoples of the United States and Canada have enjoyed harmonious relations over a long period of time. Our relations are unmatched by any other two countries. More than once has this cordial association been impressed upon me, and coming into your country last night I could not but again think that never as a barrier do any of us regard our boundary. That boundary is crossed by more trade, more tourists, more trains, more cars, more newspapers, more radio, more television, more money, more sports, than any other in the world

Indeed, we are good neighbours. We speak the same languages. We have common ideals and a common trust in each other. We have common interests and concern. On many problems we think alike, both in peace and war. At times we do the same things, and frequently we do them together. Such was the case at Ogdensburg, at Hyde Park, on the Alaska Highway, on the Permanent Joint Defence Board, and more recently in our Trans-Border Air Agreements.

The unfortunate events of two world wars have brought us even closer together. We are now jointly engaged in a very extensive defence programme designed to protect the North American continent from aggression. Incidentally, the Canadian defence programme bears comparison with that of any other country of comparable size and wealth.

For many years Canada was taken for granted as a country of fields and forests by all but a handful of Americans. That has changed today. At the moment Canada is gathering strength and making great strides forward in wealth and power. The turning point came with the discovery, after many years of disappointment, of a major oil field on the Prairies. Since then we have been forging rapidly ahead with the development of our natural resources. In this atomic age the production of uranium is of the greatest importance to any nation. In northern Alberta, important deposits of uranium are being uncovered. With the mine at Beaver Lodge in Saskatchewan in production, our deposits of uranium will be among the most important in the world. In northern Manitoba we are moving a townsite 132 miles from Sherridon to Lynn Lake, and building a railway which, together with important discoveries and developments being made in the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec, will increase our base metal production of copper and zinc. On the West Coast of British Columbia a vast expansion of our aluminum production is taking place at Kitimat; while at the other extremity of our country we have uncovered vast resources of iron ore in Quebec-Labrador. Thus, almost overnight, Canada has made good her two most serious deficiencies as an industrial power--oil and iron.

The development of these resources and the accompanying industrial expansion requires ever increasing amounts of hydro-electric power. Quebec-Labrador iron provided the final and convincing reason why the building of the St. Lawrence Seaway without further delay is necessary to provide transportation for our expanding commerce.

All of these developments will unquestionably assist the industrial growth of the United States. Many have been made possible by American capital that is invested in our country; but let me say that, on a per capita basis, there is far more Canadian capital invested in the United States. It would seem to me that the rapid economic progress of Canada should be in the best interests of the United States. Taking the long view, this would tend to make Canada a more important ally, increasing continually in strength and standing shoulder to shoulder with the United States in the interests of human liberty which we both hold so dear.

I said that the St. Lawrence Seaway was urgently required for our expanding economy. This natural waterway is in the heartland of the North American Continent. It is in the centre of the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Basin.

WHAT IS THE GREAT LAKES - ST. LAWRENCE BASIN?

It is a vast drainage system covering an area of 678,000 square miles, 493,000 of which are in Canada and 185,000 in the United States, over which there is an average annual precipitation of over 30 inches. It includes Lake Superior, Michigan, Huron, St. Clair, Erie and Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, together with all the tributary rivers and streams.

WHAT DOES THE GREAT LAKES - ST. LAWRENCE BASIN CONSIST OF?

It consists of five steps which are its chief assets in that they contain 9 million horsepower of hydro-electric energy, all of which is located reasonably close to large and growing industrial areas, a large part of this power being as yet undeveloped. Conversely, these five steps are its chief liabilities because they constitute a series of natural obstructions consisting of rapids and waterfalls which intervene between the successive steps and must be surmounted to facilitate through navigation. The five steps are:-

1. St. Mary's Falls, lying between Lake Superior and Lake Huron, where there is a drop of 21 feet.
2. The St. Clair - Detroit passage joining Lake Huron and Lake Erie, where there is a drop of 8 feet.
3. Niagara River, emptying from Lake Erie into Lake Ontario, with a drop of 326 feet.
4. The Upper St. Lawrence River from Lake Ontario to Montreal, with a drop of 225 feet.
5. Montreal to the sea - a drop of 20 feet.

As I have said, these five steps, it is estimated, would develop approximately 9 million horsepower, divided as follows:

At Niagara.....	3,600,000 H.P.
In the International Rapids Section.....	2,200,000 H.P.
In the Soulanges Section.....	2,000,000 H.P.
In the Lachine Section.....	1,200,000 H.P.

Nine million horsepower of hydro-electric energy which is derived from a drainage area of 678,000 square miles, having an average annual precipitation of over 30 inches per annum, is an extremely important natural asset which should be fully exploited, as the resulting energy which can be derived therefrom will be continuous so long as the rainfall over the drainage area continues.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE GREAT LAKES - ST. LAWRENCE NAVIGATION SYSTEM AS WE KNOW IT TODAY?

As a navigation system as presently constituted, it divides into four sections, as follows:-

1. From the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Montreal, a distance of 1,000 miles, with controlling navigation channels of 35 feet in depth.
2. From Montreal to Lake Ontario, a distance of 180 miles, with controlling navigation channels of 14 feet.
3. From Lake Ontario to Lake Erie, a distance of 200 miles, with controlling navigation channels of 25 feet.
4. From Lake Erie to the head of the Lakes, a distance of 970 miles, with controlling navigation channels of 25 feet downbound and 21 feet upbound.

In other words, this whole transportation system extends for a distance of well in excess of 2,000 miles into the very heart of the North American Continent.

The boundary line separating Canada and the United States follows the 45th Parallel of Latitude until it strikes the St. Lawrence River at a point where oddly enough the boundaries of the State of New York, the Province of Quebec and the Province of Ontario meet a short distance east of Cornwall, and thence, for a distance of 115 miles westerly, follows the middle of the stream until it strikes the foot of Lake Ontario. It is in a portion of this area, namely, in the International Rapids Section, that 2,200,000 h.p. of electric energy is going to waste, one half of which belongs to your country, and the other half to mine. It is over this section lying in boundary waters that there has been so much talk, but so little action.

From time immemorial Canada has assumed complete responsibility for the provision of the navigation facilities from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Lake Erie; and, up until this moment, the United States has assumed almost complete responsibility for through navigation facilities from Lake Erie to the head of the Lakes.

It is quite natural that, in the process of the economic development of the United States, active interest should have been concentrated upon the Upper Section of the St. Lawrence - Great Lakes system, because of certain important factors. These factors were (a) the vast iron ore deposits in the Mesabi Range just west of Lake Superior; (b) the occurrence of limestone near Lake Michigan and (c) the occurrence of the large coal deposits in the areas south of Lake Erie. To keep pace with the industrial expansion of the United States, it became necessary to bring these three natural products together and, as they were all low-grade commodities, cheap transportation was important, and that cheap transportation was made available only by the improvements made in the Upper Lakes Section of this great system.

On the other hand, for well over two hundred years Canada has been actively interested in and exclusively responsible for the progressive development which has taken place in the St. Lawrence River from the Gulf to Lake Erie. The first canals in this area provided 9 foot navigation. This was followed by canals and locks allowing 14 foot draft. Later the waterway above the International Section was improved to 27 foot draft by the construction of the new Welland Canal below Lake Erie. The River below Montreal has been deepened to provide a channel having a minimum width of 600 feet and a depth of 35 feet. The bottleneck in the Seaway - 14 foot navigation in the International Rapids Section - would have been removed long since had your country extended the necessary co-operation.

I submit to you, therefore, that from Lake Erie to the sea the St. Lawrence Seaway has been improved and maintained by Canada. Every important betterment has been carried out and paid for by Canada at a cost in the neighbourhood of 300 million dollars. Nevertheless ships of every nation have used the present seaway without payment of tolls for nearly 50 years. An international treaty provides that when tolls on shipping are imposed they will bear equally on Canadian and U.S. registered ships.

Canada proposes to pay on a self-liquidating basis for improvements in the International Rapids Section. Why then should your country withhold its co-operation and thus delay completion of this vital Canadian transportation outlet? I must confess that I do not know the answer.

It is reported that certain seaport, railway and coal operators are strong opponents of the Seaway. I do not for one moment contest their right to oppose this project, but surely it means something that in my country these same interests are strongly in favour of it.

It is said that it would be a mistake for the United States to allow Canada to build the Seaway alone; but, if this be a mistake, then we made it some time ago. In 1952 the Government of the United States agreed to join with Canada in an application to the International Joint Commission for the development of power on the distinct understanding that Canada would at the same time construct the Seaway. This we have undertaken to do by an Exchange of Notes between our two Governments.

It is said that Canada may not always be a friendly nation. I cannot conceive of our two countries living on other than friendly terms, nor of Canada becoming powerful enough to be able to afford to be unfriendly. However, if it is felt that United States' interests would be safeguarded by the construction of a canal on your side of the International Section, why not go ahead and build and let us do likewise on our side? This might appear foolish at this time but we have done this at the Sault where there are two canals, one on each side of the boundary line, and both are pretty fully used. I am confident this would soon become true here too.

It is said that this would not be a profitable venture and that therefore it would be unwise for the United States to waste funds on the project. But we are not asking for any funds from you. Canada is not seeking financial aid on the St. Lawrence Seaway. On the contrary, Canada is ready, willing and anxious to proceed with the Seaway at her own expense without cost to the American taxpayer. Canada has passed legislation both provincially and federally and could start the project tomorrow. The Ontario Hydro Electric Power Commission will develop the power jointly with an American entity and the Federal Government at Ottawa will build the navigational facilities. All that is required is the granting of a licence by the Federal Power Commission and the naming of an entity by the American Government, in accordance with their undertaking, to join with the Canadian entity in the development of power. If it is felt that the Seaway is an uneconomical investment for the United States, and since more than 1,000 miles of the St. Lawrence is wholly within Canadian territory, this appears to me to be a good case for encouraging independent action by Canada.

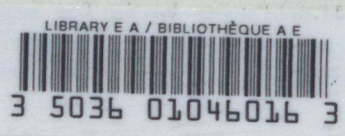
In the far north, on the east coast and on the west coast of our country, we are co-operating with the United States in the defence of this continent. It is incomprehensible to us why the same effective co-operation is not forthcoming with respect to the Seaway, a project that has been declared by the Permanent Joint Defence Board, a United States and Canadian body - to be urgent from the point of view of national defence.

Here let me pause to say that we in Canada were greatly heartened and encouraged in the last few days by President Eisenhower's statement. His endorsement of the project in the interest of national security confirms the thinking of our two governments down through the years.

No undertaking has been more thoroughly investigated in the last 30 years by our two countries than this one. Engineers, economists and experts from both countries have made studies and surveys and have found it to be feasible from an economic and engineering standpoint. During that time the project has been supported by each succeeding President of the United States and Prime Minister of Canada.

But there is more to it than this. The development of the Seaway is the right thing to do. It is the logical and the prudent thing to do and it is my profound conviction that the judgment of history will condemn those who oppose it. The building of the Panama Canal through the Isthmus of Panama was a logical project no matter at what cost. The construction of the Suez Canal linking the Mediterranean with the Red Sea was equally logical. On the question of opening the heartland of North America to the trade and commerce of the world the verdict must unquestionably be the same.

Certain interests may be powerful enough to stop it for a time but in the long run common sense must prevail. We would like to see it prevail now. Not in a year's time or two years' time but now, because each and every day Canada is being hampered in her efforts to expand her economy and to grow to greater strength.



It is reported that certain airport, railway and coal operators are strong opponents of the Seaway. I do not for one moment contest their right to oppose this project, but surely it means something that in my country these same interests are strongly in favour of it.

It is said that it would be a mistake for the United States to allow Canada to build the Seaway alone, but it is a mistake, then we made it some time ago. In 1952 the Government of the United States agreed to join with Canada in an application to the International Joint Commission for the development of power on the district understanding that Canada would at the same time construct the Seaway. This we have undertaken to do by an exchange of Notes between our two Governments.

It is said that Canada may not always be a friendly nation. I cannot conceive of our two countries living on other than friendly terms, nor of Canada becoming powerful enough to be able to afford to be unfriendly. However, it is felt that United States interests would be safeguarded by the construction of a canal on your side of the International Sector, why not go ahead and build and let us do likewise on our side? This might appear foolish at this time but we have done this at the Sault where there are two canals, one on each side of the boundary line, and both are pretty fully used. I am confident this would soon become true here too.

It is said that this would not be a profitable venture and that therefore it would be unwise for the United States to waste funds on the project. But we are not asking for any funds from you, Canada is not seeking financial aid on the St. Lawrence Seaway. On the contrary, Canada is ready, willing and anxious to proceed with the Seaway at her own expense without cost to the American taxpayer. Canada has passed legislation both provincially and federally and could start the project tomorrow. The Atomic Hydro Electric Power Commission will develop the power jointly with an American entity and the Federal Government at Ottawa will build the navigational facilities. All that is required is the granting of a licence by the Federal Power Commission and the naming of an entity by the Canadian entity in the development of power. If their undertaking to join with the Canadian entity in the development of power, and it is felt that the Seaway is an uncommercial investment for the United States, and since more than 1,000 miles of the St. Lawrence is wholly within Canadian territory, this appears to me to be a good case for encouraging independent action by Canada.