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THE WHITE HOUSE

United States Senate

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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

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O.F.

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March 17, 1953

Personal and Confidential

Honorable Sherman Adams  
Assistant to the President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

My dear Governor:

I want to thank you for your call this afternoon.

I should like to confirm a few of the points I made, and also to present a few additional observations. They are rather extended, but I hope your massive work-load will not prevent you from reading them personally.

As I see it, the situation is as follows:

1. Nothing short of an all-out fight by the Chief Executive personally, and by every agency of his Administration, can assure victory for the Seaway in the 83rd Congress. The Seaway bill must become a "must", not a priority "Z" affair.

Any temporizing statement to the effect that "it would be nice to join with Canada, but that there are some obstacles or problems" -- any such statement would practically automatically assure the defeat of the Seaway.

2. As you know, we either join with Canada in the next few months or we close the door forever. Speed is essential, therefore, in a White House decision coordinating the battle and directing every agency to back the Seaway to the hilt, rather than to permit any pussy-footing.

3. Frankly, I cannot agree with any contention for one moment that merely because two or three of the Republican Leaders on Capitol Hill are not for the Seaway -- that such a fact should constitute an obstacle to the Eisenhower Administration's stand.

In the first place, the splendid position of our Senate Majority Leader, Bob Taft, is a factor of the greatest magnitude.

*Read by Shanley  
(No Reply)*

In the second place, other leader's hostile stand is not necessarily irrevocable. On the contrary, President Eisenhower has already been successful, notably on the bill granting him reorganization powers, to suggest a prompt change in a House Committee position.

Even if every single one of the leaders of the Congress were against it, that would still not be a binding argument against a pro-Seaway stand.

As a matter of fact, I think that it would be a tragic black-eye for the Administration if it were timidly -- in action, if not in words -- to retreat from a position that has been held by every Administration in the last three decades. It would be a political black-eye. It would be a psychological black-eye. It would be a surrender to false "unity", by surrendering principle.

Many of Mr. Truman's Congressional leaders opposed the Seaway, but that did not prevent him from fighting for it and from directing his agencies to fight for it and to send their highest officials to the Hill to back it -- and not just give it "lip service."

If Teddy Roosevelt had adopted a "let-Congress-decide-all-by-itself" attitude, we never would have had the Panama Canal; some of his Congressional leaders were unalterably against it.

4. I have no doubt that, as you said, there are many Canadian leaders who very definitely would prefer that they built it themselves.

That, however, is one phase of Canadian approach.

What you and I must think of -- as I know you agree -- is our own American national interest, basically. That national interest requires that we not abandon title to this great resource.

5. Speaking purely personally, I should like to recall that when I saw President Eisenhower at the Commodore in November, I said that I would never ask him for anything for myself. I have yet to make a single personal request on our great President.

But this project means more to my state, and, more important, it means more to the nation than almost any other single bill which will come up during these two years, and I feel that I have every right to ask with all the force and earnestness at my command that a strong favorable stand be taken by all the Administration's officials, right down the line.



