

ST-L
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ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY -- GREAT LAKES
CHANNELS AND HARBORS



Throughout the discussions of the Wiley bill prior to the expression of Administration favor, the President again and again emphasized the criticism he had received from various sources to the effect that the cost of the Seaway would be only a beginning and that the eventual cost of all the channel and harbor improvements would run over \$2 billion. Implicit in his comments was disapproval of taking on such a heavy obligation.

Following an NSC action in April 1953 (favoring Seaway construction in principle but reserving opinion on extent of commitment), a Cabinet subcommittee was constituted to shape up Administration policy. That Committee reported at Cabinet on May 8 and recommended Administration participation in the project up to the Lake Erie terminus of the Welland Canal. The recommendation carried several provisos including one that the project must be self-liquidating as anticipated in the Wiley bill. Secretary Weeks pointed out in summarizing the report that the Administration would have to undertake deepening of the St. Clair channel and the Straits of Mackinac at a cost of \$100 million. He believed that the dredging of harbors in the Great Lakes areas would eventually have to be done. Despite these consequences Secretary Weeks was ready to give Commerce approval to the limited project (end of Welland Canal) -- 'but recognizing within several years the Administration will be pressed for more'. The President did not comment on aspects beyond the Welland Canal.

At the Cabinet meeting of July 16, 1954, Mr. Anderson reported on progress of the Seaway. He stressed a point at issue which might depend on additional funds from the United States. The President interjected that he would shudder at the prospect of going back to Congress for more money after what the opposition had said about additional costs once the project was started. Director Hughes noted that many projects were being worked up by states and cities in the Great Lakes area. The President commented that they could take care

of the projects themselves, and he recalled the debate in regard to future additional costs. He added that he was likely to get tough about this because when it came right down to the matter of who benefited it turned out to be the particular harbor. Secretary Dulles made a comparison with Administration participation in road building, but the President replied that the Administration does not pick up the entire check for road building. He recalled once more the predictions of the railroad officials about future costs. Secretary Humphrey concluded the discussion by noting that there had long been a 27-foot project being developed on the Lakes.

Legislative meeting records reflect no significant conversations on this point. At the end of the Conference of March 23, 1953, the President asked Senators Taft and Wiley to come into his office for a bit (on a guess, this concerned foreign affairs rather than the St. Lawrence Seaway).

