

Interim Supply

very heavy traffic that would be routed down over this road during the war in connection with defence projects in the north.

That traffic did come and it battered down the light grade; it destroyed the surface. Alberta got nothing out of that traffic except a small revenue from the gasoline tax. The large trucks which carried heavy loads, and they were exceedingly heavy loads, were largely United States army trucks and therefore no revenues were available from licences. By the time the war was over the road had to be rebuilt because it was pretty well battered to pieces. It was never designed in the first place as a highway to carry heavy truck traffic such as travelled over it from 1941, the year when the United States got into the war, until 1945.

Any fair mind would admit that for some years after the close of world war II machinery and materials, engineers and equipment were just not available and therefore no reconstruction of the road was possible up until a time when costs had increased very materially; in fact, until costs had increased two or three times over what they were when the project was built. It does seem only fair, in the light of all the circumstances in the case, that the federal government should share the cost of rebuilding the road. There is a great deal of complaint about the road, and as the hon. member for Mackenzie River indicated by his interpolation the other day, the road is in shocking condition in its northern portions. He blamed the province of Alberta for not having done something about it. I say it seems only fair, in the light of all the circumstances, that the federal government should share the cost of rebuilding the road.

I believe some attempt has been made of late by the province of Alberta to get such an agreement with the federal government, but thus far with no success whatever. Alberta did go ahead some years ago with a program of rebuilding the road and bringing it up to main highway specifications, beginning at Grimshaw in the south. The program is going along well and just as rapidly as money and equipment can be made available. The highway is now in good or fair shape as far north as High Level, which is about 110 miles from the boundary line between Alberta and the territories. Between High Level and the boundary there is very little settlement in Alberta, and in the foreseeable future perhaps very little will be made. However, between High Level and the boundary the vast bulk of the traffic on the road is traffic in connection with the opening up of the Northwest Territories. It runs, of course, over the whole length of the road, but in that last 110 miles

[Mr. Low.]

there is very little Alberta traffic that goes in or out of the territory. There is 110 miles of road which it seems necessary for the Alberta government to maintain and now to rebuild which will do them very little good, except perhaps for a small increase in business that will come to merchants in northern Alberta as a consequence of having a road built.

It would, therefore, seem nothing but fairness for this government to share the cost of rebuilding at least that section of 110 miles. I believe that is all the Alberta government would request. A claim has been made that Alberta business people will benefit from any increase in traffic into and out of the northern territories and to the extent that they do benefit, I suggest that Alberta does have a responsibility. They also have some responsibility for providing access roads to settlements in the area, that is access roads off the main highway. The federal government also has some responsibility and it seems to me the sooner they recognize it the sooner the northern territory is going to get the much needed development that has to come. Development cannot come without transportation and communication. Transportation and communication have to come first, not after the development gets well under way.

I should like to point out the cost involved in building a road of that kind, that is bringing the Mackenzie road up to highway specifications so that it will carry the heavy traffic which goes over it into the northern territory. Let me emphasize at this point that not much can be done until the road from High Level north to the boundary is rebuilt and brought up to highway specifications because if we are going to contribute anything to the development of the northern territories the heavy traffic necessary has to be able to travel easily over the whole length of the road, that is the 300 miles down to rail connections at Grimshaw.

Let us look at the cost. It is estimated that the minimum cost of rebuilding the highway will be not less than \$25,000 per mile. That is approximately what it has been costing from Grimshaw north to High Level. This would mean a total outlay by the province of \$2,750,000 unless the federal government takes a hand in helping to build it. This is only one phase of the matter. Let us look at maintenance for a moment. Unless the road is hard surfaced—to begin with it will be gravelled surface—everybody knows that the cost of maintaining a gravelled highway is very high. The fact is that it is estimated that the maintenance cost of that highway after it is rebuilt will be no less than \$1,500 per mile per year. When you calculate the cost over