

*Niagara Falls Bridge*

An hon. MEMBER: And now the hon. member for Peterborough West.

Mr. DUFFUS: Something has been said about a nigger in the woodpile. I do not know which of these hon. gentlemen is supposed to be the nigger, but one thing I am sure of is that the woodpile is pretty well Tory. When this matter first came up I did not intend to speak, but now I find it difficult to refrain from doing so. The obstruction looks to me like a filibuster, and in my opinion it is doing the people of Ontario and of the dominion a grave injustice at this time. As a member of the committee I have listened to and have gone into the evidence. I have also read the bill. As I understand the situation, the government of Ontario, through a corporation, is seeking the consent of this parliament to construct a bridge over Niagara river from Niagara Falls, Ontario, to Niagara Falls, New York, to replace a bridge formerly known as the "Falls View" or "Honeymoon" bridge, which, as has been said many times in this debate, was destroyed by nature in January of this year. I believe that nature, or shall I say Divine Providence, has been extremely kind in removing the old bridge. At times there have been several hundred automobiles and trucks simultaneously on the bridge, and had the bridge collapsed with those automobiles and trucks and many more hundreds of people, it would have been, to say the least, an international catastrophe.

I have been told—and I believe it is true—that 5,304,000 people passed over the old bridge in the course of only seven months during the year 1937, and I believe it is our duty as public men not only to the present but to succeeding generations to see that there is an adequate bridge at this point. Now that the old bridge is gone, I submit that the most serviceable structure that reasonable means and human ingenuity can provide is the only one that should be considered at this time, if ample service and accommodation are to be maintained.

The United States tourist trade, to Canada and particularly to the people of the province of Ontario, is an important consideration. It is, and will continue to be, a major factor in the social and economic well-being, not only of the people of Ontario but of the dominion at large. The tourist trade is fast becoming our greatest industry and it is of increasing economic importance to the country. Moreover, its increase in gasoline revenue is a large and important item to the people of Ontario. I contend that free and uninterrupted traffic to and from the United States at this point will greatly assist the

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tourist trade and that ample facilities for customs and immigration inspection should be provided because that, too, is of vital importance to people on both sides of the river, as well as those from elsewhere who wish to cross the bridge from time to time.

I repeat that the present delay constitutes a loss to all of the people of Ontario and to many in the dominion, except perhaps to those who live in the city of St. Catharines according to the contention of the hon. member for Lincoln. When the matter was discussed in the railway committee it was said that it had been rushed through. On the first day the committee sat two-thirds of the morning was spent by those who were introducing this new proposal. On the second day at least two-thirds of the time of the committee was spent by those who were opposing it, and who were interested in the old bridge. With the exception of the hon. members who have objected to the proposal in this house, the opinion of the members of the committee was practically unanimous. I have been told that no bill of this kind has been given greater consideration in many years. I cannot substantiate that, because I have not been a member very long. At any rate let me say that tourists and motorists going to and fro between the United States and Canada are usually in a hurry. Delay is irritating and not in the best interests of the tourist trade or likely to create good will with our United States neighbours. Having regard for ample accommodations and the necessary outlay now and in the future, I am convinced that a structure backed and maintained by the province of Ontario and the state of New York is the only type that would be wholly satisfactory in these days of rapidly increasing tourist traffic. Roads and highways constructed only a few years ago are now found to be totally inadequate. It is the duty of public men to guard carefully against a recurrence of this condition of affairs. I should like to read to the committee a couple of verses which express this point of view:

Hordes of autos now remind us  
We should build our roads to stay,  
And departing leave behind us  
Roads that will not blow away.

When our children pay the mortgage  
Our fathers made to build those roads,  
They'll not have to ask the question—  
"Here's the bonds, but where's the roads?"

That pretty well expresses my conviction on this matter, and in the interests of the people of the United States, Ontario and the Dominion of Canada as a whole I am prepared wholeheartedly to support this bill. I think that delay will be a serious mistake and loss