

Trans-Canada Highway

I also suggest for the very serious consideration of this government, when it comes to financing the trans-Canada highway, that they make it part of the shelf of projects designed to cushion the Canadian economy against the onslaught of depression. The only way that can be done is to make use of national credits without interest, which would be expended as it became necessary to expand the monetary supply so that effective demand can be kept at a high level in this country.

Mr. A. F. Macdonald (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, it would appear from all indications that everyone in this house is agreed that Canada should have a transcontinental highway. The building of this highway has now reached the stage of definite plans, and it is interesting to observe that a Liberal government is responsible for this constructive step.

Mr. Thatcher: It is about time.

Mr. Macdonald (Edmonton East): What portion of the cost of the trans-Canada highway will be borne by the federal government and under what auspices the construction will take place are matters of negotiation between the dominion and the provinces concerned. What route the construction will follow is a matter of grave concern to all Canadians who are interested in this national undertaking. It is hoped that some time in the not too distant future there will be more than one trans-Canada highway welding together the components of our great nation. At the moment, however, we are immediately concerned with the building of our first national roadway, and my remarks will be directed to a discussion of the location of this highway.

There are members in this house representing the ten provinces affected, from Newfoundland to British Columbia, and it would appear to me that my observations should deal more directly with that part of the trans-Canada highway which passes through the province of Alberta, although the principle involved is equally applicable to the other parts of this Canadian undertaking. Representing as I do the constituency of Edmonton East in the province of Alberta, I have given special attention to the possible routes of this system through the passes of the Rocky mountains, namely the Crowsnest pass, the Kicking Horse pass and the Yellowhead pass. It has been my privilege to personally traverse all three of these divides of our picturesque Canadian Rockies. As a layman, I was particularly impressed with the natural roadway, and the accessibility of good grades through the Yellowhead pass. But I would not feel qualified to give judgment on which route should be chosen. I am equally convinced that those who have undertaken to make a definite decision are not

fully qualified, nor have they sufficient facts at their disposal on which to give a sound judgment.

There are three main factors to be considered in deciding where the trans-Canada highway should pass through these mountains, namely, the practicability for civilian use, the accessibility for defence purposes, and the cost of construction. On this basis it is difficult to understand the decision of the provincial government of Alberta proposing that the Kicking Horse pass route should be followed, when all available evidence points to the Yellowhead pass route as being preferable on all three counts.

Mr. Smith (Calgary West): Now I will tell one.

Mr. Macdonald (Edmonton East): I am not suggesting that the recommendation of the provincial government of Alberta should be ignored, but I am definitely stating that there is sufficient evidence against this recommendation to make it imperative for a national highway commission to be established which would weigh carefully the merits or demerits of all three locations. The best engineering brains in this country should be mobilized for the purpose of forming a fact-finding board or trans-Canada highway commission with representatives thereon from the armed services. This commission could consider everything contributory to the construction of a highway such as route, costs, weather conditions and military requirements.

To substantiate my concern over the hasty or ill-considered decision of preferring the Kicking Horse pass, I would call the attention of this house to several factors which should interest all members. There is a stretch of highway west of the Kicking Horse pass known as the Big Bend, on which the annual snowfall has approached nearly sixteen feet in one season. In the pass itself, there are twelve miles in the Kicking Horse canyon through which a twenty-two foot top highway could not be built without a cost approaching \$200,000 per mile. The railroad in the gorge would make extensive blasting operations impracticable. On the other hand, the Yellowhead pass does not present such formidable obstructions to either construction or maintenance.

The Yellowhead route will approach and proceed through the mountains and arrive at Vancouver at a lower elevation than any other proposed route. The Kicking Horse pass elevation is 5,337 feet; the Crowsnest elevation is 4,450 feet and the Yellowhead, 3,717 feet. As there is the least snowfall on the Yellowhead route, that is another good reason why this route should be considered for