

Friday, March 6, 1942

The house met at three o'clock.

PRINTING OF PARLIAMENT**CONCURRENCE IN FIRST AND SECOND REPORTS OF
JOINT COMMITTEE**

Mr. VINCENT DUPUIS (Chambly-Rouville) presented the first and second reports of the joint committee of both houses on the printing of parliament, and moved that the reports be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

ALASKA HIGHWAY**RECOMMENDATIONS OF JOINT DEFENCE BOARD—
ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN CANADA AND
THE UNITED STATES**

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Since I answered a question of the leader of the opposition (Mr. Hanson) yesterday regarding the status of the discussions with reference to the construction of a highway to Alaska, a recommendation of the Canadian section of the permanent joint board on defence on this subject, which had been referred to the appropriate military authorities for examination, has been considered and approved by the war committee of the cabinet. I am now therefore in a position to make a statement on the subject to the house.

The advisability from a military standpoint of constructing a highway to Alaska has been under review by the defence services of Canada and the United States. After final consideration by the permanent joint board on defence on February 25 and 26, a unanimous recommendation favouring the construction of such a road was addressed to the two governments. This recommendation has now been examined and approved by both Canada and the United States.

The recommendation of the defence board, which has been endorsed by the military authorities in each country and approved by the respective governments, is based on purely military considerations. The dimensions of the road, the type of construction and the route chosen have all been selected on this basis and this basis only.

The road as approved will start at Fort St. John in northern British Columbia and follow the general line of the airports which Canada has constructed at Fort Nelson, Watson Lake and Whitehorse; and thence via Boundary and Big Delta to Fairbanks. The highway will thus connect with the existing road systems of Canada and Alaska.

The United States government, appreciating the burden of war expenditure already incurred by Canada since her entry into the war, and in particular on the construction of the air route to Alaska, has offered to undertake the building and war-time maintenance of the highway. At the conclusion of the war that part of the highway which is in Canada will, of course, become in all respects an integral part of the Canadian highway system. This offer has been accepted, and its terms will be set forth in an exchange of notes which will be signed and made public in the very near future. Canada will, of course, provide all necessary facilities, including the right of way for the road. Meanwhile, United States engineers who have been selected to make the survey and to lay out a pioneer road have been authorized to commence work without further delay.

Mr. GEORGE BLACK (Yukon): Following the question asked of the Prime Minister yesterday afternoon by the hon. leader of the opposition, as I feel quite keenly on the subject of the Alaska highway I took it upon myself to write a letter to the Prime Minister on the subject. Probably he has not seen it yet. In the letter I referred to what he quoted to-day, that the road will begin at Fort St. John and go north through Canada, out of the valley of the Mackenzie river into the Yukon, and thence into Alaska. It will be about 1,200 miles in length. It goes for the most part over tundra and muskeg, the most difficult and expensive terrain on which to build a serviceable road. If the United States want to take more men and supplies to Alaska now—and I think they should, although to my knowledge, because I have seen them go, vast numbers of men and great quantities of war materials have already gone there by sea and air—the way to do it is to take them by rail to Prince Rupert, now, not next year or the year after, and from Prince Rupert send them by sea—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Order.

Mr. BLACK (Yukon): If hon. members will allow me for a moment; up to the present the matter of time has not been much of a consideration in this house.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: As a matter of privilege let the hon. member finish.

Mr. SPEAKER: If it is the wish of the house that the hon. member be allowed to make this explanation on the orders of the day, of course the Chair will accede to it. But I wish to point out that exception has already been taken in the house to questions and statements following the answer to a question put on the orders of the day and leading almost to the