

Canadians have overslept in failing to realize the potentialities of the North. Even now many Canadians are in a state of an awakening consciousness. Alaska was colonized before Canada became a nation and has now felt the full impact of southern civilization. Greenland, under Denmark's care, is a generation or two ahead of northern Canada in its development.

The Soviet Union - which has a dozen towns of 50,000 people or more north of the Arctic Circle - has realized the development and strategic demands and needs of the north. Canadians mean to redress this balance, and soon. Nothing can help to do so more quickly than the construction of roads - for lack of transportation, more than climate or any other factor, is the major obstacle to the development of the north.

The building and extension of highways into these Northern areas would pay dividends in national development. Roads will provide for the greater utilization of our resources, which would sustain a high level of economic activity. Such a policy would provide gainful employment, and it would meet the need for defence roads in vulnerable and inaccessible parts of our country.

To Canada as the nearest neighbour of the United States and the U.S.S.R., good roads, in particular into the Northern areas, are essential to the mobility of defence forces and material should war come suddenly. Roads into the Northern area would constitute a vast attraction to the United States' tourists who are eager to travel into the most northerly areas.

Under private enterprise the initiative for resource development must come from individuals or companies which are prepared to take a calculated risk based on their faith in the future potential of the resource concerned. But there is a role for governments as well - an important role to be carried out if the efforts of individual initiative are to be encouraged and not restricted. It seems to me that it is the clear responsibility of government to provide opportunity for the development of our national wealth for the benefit of all Canadians.

I would be the last to suggest that nothing has been done in the past. Many venturesome spirits did traverse, explore and settle those faraway parts, but for decades after 1867 we Canadians were busy becoming a nation. The development of the West - which could never have happened had not men of vision and confidence undertaken the construction of a trans-continental railway absorbed the pioneering energies of Canadians until after the turn of the century. Since then, Canadians have been preoccupied with wars and rumours of wars, and the development of the industrial heartland of central Canada. The possibilities of our north have been largely forgotten or ignored.