

Supply—Transport

I realize fully, Mr. Chairman, that the remarks I am making tonight are only of an introductory nature to this subject.

I would be most happy if the minister would give a less qualified commitment with regard to the willingness of the federal government, jointly with the provincial government, to enter into a feasibility study of a tunnel or floating causeway or whatever it may be to connect Vancouver Island with the mainland. I am taking my figures from the report of the Redistribution Commission, but I understand that the population base of Prince Edward Island is 104,659 and the population base of Vancouver Island is 289,679. If the causeway to Prince Edward Island is nine miles in length, one could argue that an equivalent on a per capita basis so far as Vancouver Island is concerned could be something of the order of 27 miles. I understand that a direct link across the Strait of Georgia from Point Grey to Gabriola Island, on the outskirts of Nanaimo, would be of the order of 16 miles. I think this may be fairly close to the length of the proposed crossing of the Strait of Belle Isle, but I have never been there.

In any event, Mr. Chairman, if the minister is prepared to indicate the willingness of the federal government to proceed immediately with a feasibility study, then perhaps I, for one, might be willing to be less emphatic in pressing my argument on the subsidy for the construction of vessels to operate between Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia under the aegis of a public authority.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I may just point out to the minister, in view of the discussion we have had about the Canadian Pacific Railway, and in view of the rather sorry history of their previous services by ferry to Vancouver Island, that perhaps his whole concept of shipbuilding subsidies is upside down, and that if there is to be any subsidy it should be for vessels which are to be constructed for a publicly owned and operated authority which is basically concerned with providing transportation services to people as they require them, rather than primarily with providing a profit to private shareholders.

Mr. Forrestall: Mr. Chairman, I was going to make these remarks as we went through the various items, but since they involve at least three subsequent votes, namely 30, 35, 40 and 75, rather than delay the passage of these items as we come to them I thought it might be more expedient if I were to make a

few remarks now and confine them to the broad field of aviation.

● (8:00 p.m.)

I should like to extend on behalf of a lot of people interested in aviation in Canada our thanks to the Department of Transport and to the minister for certain very enlightened attitudes in the field of general aviation. I think particularly of aid to municipalities which are interested in the construction of small airports. Perhaps at this point I should qualify what I mean by general aviation. It is that field of aviation that excludes military aircraft and the larger commercial air carrier, such as Air Canada, C.P.A., and to a lesser extent E.P.A. and Eastern Canada. I am referring rather to the small commercial service firms in this country and to the many thousands of businessmen who utilize the aircraft and airports of our country and the flying clubs which train the pilots to fly.

Coming back to my first point, the question of aid to municipalities for the construction of airstrips, as beneficial as the fund of up to \$1 million has been we still have from one end of the country to the other a lot of criticism from municipalities who would like to take advantage of this offer and provide their area with a strip capable of meeting immediate needs of local flyers. However, they are a little reluctant to proceed because part of the legislation covering this kind of assistance by the government involves the turning over of the ownership of the land to the federal authority, and quite understandably this a lot of municipalities are reluctant to do.

I would ask the minister and his departmental officials, who have done much to bring this legislation about, to improve upon the earlier legislation, which involved cost sharing and which was very limited in application. The next time this matter comes to their attention I would ask whether they could find some way of making it possible for the specific municipal units involved to retain ownership of the land which they are now required to turn over for the construction of these small airports.

The second item to which I should like to refer the minister and his department is the question of landing fees for light aircraft, both private and commercial, at Department of Transport airports across the country. It is my understanding that this matter is under study by the department. I hope that out of this study will come the elimination of landing fees.