

*Northern Affairs*

before me letters from men well known in Canada, such as Senator Bartlett of Alaska, Senator George Aiken of Vermont, Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, Congressman Harold Johnson of California and many others I cannot take the time to list this afternoon. This highway represents one of the great epochs in the history of northwestern and western Canada. It is now more than 25 years since Canada and the United States agreed to the name, Alaska highway. This is a 1,523 mile road between Dawson Creek, British Columbia and Fairbanks, Alaska. I think perhaps we fail to recall what a tremendous feat the building of this highway was. It was built in haste but it has a place in history. It is something in which North America can take pride, Canadians and Americans.

In 1942, there was the threat of the Japanese coming to the shores of North America. The muskegs, forests and mountains gave United States engineers nightmares as they faced their task of building a military road through the wilderness in the shortest time possible. At that time the Japanese were pressing United States forces in the Pacific, and an invasion of North America, with landings on the west coast, was feared. A road to Alaska built through Canada was regarded as an essential defence undertaking. Construction was started in the spring of 1942. Six months and \$140 million later, the highway opened to wheeled traffic. About 10,000 United States engineer troops and about 4,000 Canadian civilians completed this incredible task. In 1943 the road was improved with an all-weather gravel surface. There are 133 bridges of 20 feet or more in length. From the Alaskan border to Fairbanks, the highway is now paved. From the United States border through Alberta and beyond Fort St. John, the two provincial governments of Alberta and B.C. have constructed and paved connecting highways up to or better than trans-Canada standards. There are still approximately 1,200 miles unpaved.

This highway, built as a military road, does not meet the demands that civilian and commercial traffic now place upon it. A few years ago it was turned over to the Department of Public Works from the Canadian military, having been turned over by the United States military to the Canadian military at the end of world war II. The cost of maintaining this highway is now expensive, yet it carries an amount of freight which is even beyond our realization. It has been a land link between

[Mr. Thompson (Red Deer).]

the United States, Alaska and that tremendously developing part of Canada which is northwestern Alberta, northeastern British Columbia and the Yukon.

In this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, I have designated the name of this highway as the Alaska-Yukon highway because that is exactly what it is. This bill presents a modern approach to a very complex problem. It would establish the Alaska-Yukon highway authority, a non-crown corporation. This corporation would be made up of members of the federal government, the provincial governments of Alberta and British Columbia and the territorial government of the Yukon. There is provision in this bill for associate membership by even municipal governments as well as foreign governments. On this basis the United States and Alaska could participate.

This idea of establishing an authority for the construction of an international project of such great importance to both countries involved is not new. It has been used several times in recent years for major projects. The idea came to me originally when I visited the tunnel that has been constructed through the Alps across the Swiss-Italian border. For years and years this tunnel was projected on the drawing boards and talked about at international conferences between Switzerland and Italy. These countries could never come to a position where they could agree to establish a joint committee for negotiations which would lead to an agreement for the building of the tunnel. Then, the idea was presented to set up an international autonomous authority to which the governments of both countries could contribute. This would eliminate the need to negotiate an international treaty and facilitate the necessary financial arrangements.

This Bill No. C-9 is drafted in such a way that not only can the federal governments of the United States and Canada contribute to the cost of construction but the provincial and territorial governments as well as the state of Alaska can also contribute.

It is my opinion that this is the only way this highway will be completed. It seems to me everyone who understands the importance of this communication road agrees that it must be built. However, there is not even enough interest in Ottawa for such a project to initiate negotiations between the two countries through the facilities of the International Joint Commission. This bill would establish a non-crown corporation which would permit participation of all governments concerned in