

seem to be going on the assumption that the provinces are financially unable to raise the money necessary to do road-building. There is certainly no evidence of that. In any event, whatever may be the case in some of the other provinces, I know the West well enough to say that they are able to raise sufficient money to meet the requirements; and I am sure that Ontario and Quebec are in an equally strong position. Not only is this true, but some provinces are in a position to obtain money at a better rate of interest than the Dominion Government proposes to pay.

I think there is a good deal in the argument of the honourable gentleman from Middleton (Hon. W. B. Ross) that while we have the constitutional authority perhaps to build roads or to aid in the building of roads, that is a power which should be very charily exercised. To my mind there is no analogy between this legislation and that concerning aid to agriculture or technical education. There are other considerations that apply to both of those public questions which differentiate them entirely from the question of building roads. Surely nothing is more provincial or municipal in its character than the construction of roads.

It has been assumed, I think very wrongly, by some of those who are so ably advocating the expenditure of this money, that those who are opposing the Bill are opposed to the construction of good roads. I am as strong an advocate of good roads as anybody in this House, and as long as I have been in public life I have always advocated the most generous appropriations by the legislature in which I had the honour to sit for the construction and proper maintenance of good roads. If on this occasion we had before us absolute proof of the inability of the provinces to raise the necessary moneys, we would have one basis which might to some extent warrant us in advancing these moneys to the provinces for the purpose of enabling them to build roads; but we have not had such proofs.

Again, it is stated elsewhere that the provincial subsidies are not adequate. In my opinion they are not. I have perused all the reports of the various interprovincial conferences that have been held for many years past and in my opinion the provinces have made out a very good case for an increase of provincial subsidies.

Hon. Mr. PRINGLE: Then why not assist the provinces?

Hon. Mr. WILLOUGHBY.

Hon. Mr. WILLOUGHBY: If I want to give aid, I will give it direct. If I were in favour of giving the provinces larger amounts than they now receive because of their greater requirements I would advocate giving them in the proper constitutional way by increasing the provincial subsidies. I do think that in consequence of the growth of the Dominion revenues, as compared with the revenues of the provinces, the time has perhaps arrived—in fact, I am satisfied that it has arrived—for a reconsideration of the question of provincial subsidies. If it is necessary to increase them, I would give the money to the provinces to be expended in their own way.

So, as I have said, because we do not approve of this measure it is not to be inferred that we are not absolutely in favour of the maintenance of good roads. I quite concur in what has been said in the eloquent speeches of the Minister of Labour (Hon. Mr. Robertson) and the honourable member for Peel (Hon. Mr. Blain) as to the economic advantages to be derived from the building of good roads. The Minister of Labour dealt with the employment of labour, and I recognize his peculiar fitness to deal with that phase of the question. I do not wish to place my views in this respect directly in opposition to those of the honourable gentleman. He has had much wider opportunities of studying the requirements of labour. But we all, at least we from the West, have had some opportunities of seeing what the requirements of labour are at the present time. In the Prairie Provinces there is at present, and there has been for some time, a dearth of agricultural labour. There is on the farms of Saskatchewan and Alberta plenty of employment for the class of persons who would work on the roads. There is no need to find them employment by a roundabout way. As a matter of fact, the diversion of labour to the building of roads is only robbing the farmers of the labour they need. I have been urging upon the Government, not lately, but before their railway policy for the present session was formed, and have also been urging upon the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, the extension of branch lines of railway in the Prairie Provinces. I am glad to say that from the great Canadian Pacific Railway Company I had a very kindly audience and found on their part a willingness to built any lines for which they could get sufficient material and labour; but the outstanding objection made by them, in the