

Alaska Highway

any consideration as to how the traveller who wishes to go there, whether he is a tourist or a person looking for a livelihood, is to traverse these road links we are constructing.

An ambitious program to extend these lines is planned, and it is hoped that eventually the rail will tie up with some sort of railway in the Yukon and that the resources of the territory will be flowing through British Columbia to the coastal ports or to the eastern industries which are in need of them.

The emphasis on northern development in that region must not be concentrated around the extraction of our resources. Any strategy in respect of the development of that region must be related to the establishment of secondary industries as well. First of all, it must be geared to the development of our renewable resources, our great timberlands, which so richly endow the region. The type of industry referred to will require people. It is not necessary to elaborate on the importance of the development of these industries or on the importance these industries will have in helping alleviate the unemployment crisis in Canada. Furthermore, an immediate result would be a great increase in tourist traffic, which is an industry of prime importance to that area. Traffic surveys, and many surveys which have been carried out by the Department of Public Works underline this statement.

As hon. members of this House will know, a great number of our neighbours to the south use this road link in travelling to the state of Alaska. This is why the American government has expressed interest in helping us with this project. The people visiting our country who share with us the vastness and the beauty of the area of which I speak take nothing home with them but memories of a unique adventure, and pictures which they might have taken en route. However, they are contributing to the western economy to the extent that the tourist industry in British Columbia ranks second only in importance to the lumber and wood fibre industry. I have lived in that area, and I have been involved with the tourist industry for the last 20 years, so I know a little about the highway in question, as I know about other highways as well.

We are concerned about northern development. It is essential that we develop a transportation policy, and a road strategy which does not yet exist in Canada. It would help if the proposed authority could develop this strategy and a general philosophy concerning northern highway travel. This is what this bill is all about. Many people who live in the north and many leaders there have voiced allegiance to the strategy. Some people living up there will have to take a stand sooner or later. They will have to tell the government soon that there should not be more construction of roads or highways and no more development of resources unless a philosophy is developed to protect the way of life they have valued for so many years.

● (1620)

So far as our native people are concerned, the first wars against them in Canada were fought for roads and railways—for the iron horse that traversed our country. Madam Speaker, I can see another battle shaping up.

I had the privilege this morning of taking part in the meeting when the people of the Northwest Territories met

[Mr. Oberle.]

with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and presented a brief on how they would like to see the north developed. They are impatient about the signs they have seen recently, and totally frustrated about the hundred years fumbling by a series of governments that have not addressed themselves to the needs and desires of people in the north.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Mrs. Iona Campagnolo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, this morning we were privileged, the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River (Mr. Oberle), myself and others, to listen to the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada as they presented their land claims to the government of Canada. The tender regard they have for the land they live in is none the less touching for it is the same feeling which we have for our part of our country.

The hon. member and I have the distinction of sharing between us the whole northern half of British Columbia; therefore the principle which he has placed before us today, the bill which would provide for the establishment of an Alaska-Yukon highway authority, is exceptionally important in view of the other aspects that we will be dealing with in connection with transportation and communication in the northern half of British Columbia, and in the territory as well as the state of Alaska.

It is a rather strange thing that in our part of the world Alaska, part of the United States, seems to us somehow to be closer than the southern part of British Columbia which is, of course, the contiguous part of the province we live in. There are often discussions between residents of the Panhandle and residents of our area in regard to road transportation, which are carried on at great length. At times it seems we forget that two countries are talking to each other about the mutual problems of access, information, and communication.

We have in northern British Columbia some magnificent resource bases that we are aware of, and of course we are not the only ones who are aware of them. Over the years we have seen an increasing interest displayed by the mining industry particularly, but also by the forest industry in development in the northern half of British Columbia. Access through this area in part is by the Alaska highway, which the hon. member referred to in his speech. I have travelled that highway many times—in a spirit of non-partisanship of course. I know that the hon. member will recognize that as I travel through what is basically his territory, that he makes up for it when he visits Skeena.

Having travelled this particular road I recognize that it is a vital link between the eastern part of British Columbia, the Yukon Territory, and of course links up with other transportation routes. I know when I have stopped to talk to people in Fort St. John or Fort Nelson their first comment generally is, "When is the Government of Canada going to do something about paving our section of the road?"

I think it would be interesting to state for the record just what the current situation is with regard to the Alaska highway. There have been 25 miles of paving