

Government Orders

things did in that period, including the CPR and the transcontinental railways. It would seem they were not in the best interests of Prince Edward Island.

If Prince Edward Island has 138,000 people as someone referred to earlier, that is a population larger than that of the province of Saskatchewan or part of the Northwest Territories when the commitment was made to build the CPR or the Grand Trunk Pacific or other railways.

I do not think it stands simply because the population is of the order of 130,000 that this is an enclave and that long term commitments this country has made to that wonderful island should not be honoured in the most modern ways possible. It seems to me this is a very modern way of recognizing the commitment we made to maintain a communication-transportation link with Prince Edward Island.

This morning I toured the Department of External Affairs and saw the communications system it is replacing at very great cost. I was reminded by the person leading the tour that this simply has to be done. It is essential because the link with the rest of the world has to be as modern as possible. Here too we have no choice. Indeed we have a greater obligation, a moral obligation to go through with this project.

In summary this fixed link will provide a stimulus to the economy of the province that currently requires the largest amount of federal government subsidy per capita. It will create jobs. It will give an economic boost in procurement, in direct jobs and in long term tourism jobs.

• (1735)

We all know about Prince Edward Island from Anne of Green Gables. All of us should have the benefit of visiting that wonderful and unique part of Canada. In the case of tourism this country is running a deficit on the current account of about \$10 billion. This is an extraordinarily large deficit, one that costs us enormously over the long term. Prince Edward Island is one part of Canada where tourism has been successful. With this bridge it will be even more successful.

For that reason I believe the project taken in the longest term—and here I dissent from the view of my colleague from Davenport—is economically sensible and feasible. The benefits will be indirect and long term but they are important to the people of Prince Edward Island.

As some hon. members have pointed out, the subsidy will be larger than the current one, but it would be no more than the cost of replacing the ferries.

Finally, it is important to carry out the long term commitments that have been made to Prince Edward Island to link that part of Canada with this part in the most modern and efficient way possible. It seems to me this proposal meets those obligations.

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Lisgar—Marquette): Madam Speaker, I am very interested in the comments the hon. member made about efficiency. I wonder if he is aware that water freight is ten times as efficient as truck or highway. Where is the cost of efficiency coming from by moving products from the island to the mainland?

Has the member done any cost study on how much extra will be spent in moving produce from the island to the mainland?

Mr. English: Madam Speaker, I have not done any studies but I am aware that water transportation is much cheaper for much longer distances. However I would say that anyone who has waited for a ferry as opposed to crossing a bridge knows one is a great deal easier and more efficient than the other.

We heard personal accounts from some hon. members who have had to wait for ferries. We heard about the three to five hour waits and other complaints about the ferry service. Currently it is not efficient. I do not think we are living up to our obligation that was first made in 1873 and has been made several times since then.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, the hon. member made reference to the inconvenience of waiting for ferries. I have waited for lots of ferries. I have also waited for bridges to be opened when they were closed because of the weather. It did not make any difference. It was just as inconvenient and just as uncomfortable waiting for one as waiting for the other.

The hon. member made reference to tourism. If this is going to be such a boon to tourism, I wonder why tourism operators on the island are campaigning to keep the Caribou Point ferry operating even if the bridge is built. They believe the tourists want tourism. They do not want just to get from point *a* to point *b* like a load of Prince Edward Island potatoes going to market; they enjoy the ferry. That was actually brought to my attention by a study done by a noted economist from the maritimes, Dr. Peter Townley from Acadia University who has panned this monument to vanity at every opportunity.

• (1740)

Mr. English: Madam Speaker, I too have waited for ferries and have waited to cross bridges. However, studies in this case have indicated that it is more efficient.