

Private Bills

It is all very well to build a bridge, but I object to a bill which would bind the federal government through the construction of a private bridge. It should be possible to find a way to build a private bridge without binding and tying up the federal government by passing a federal act to that effect.

—it is necessary to subdivide it into residential, commercial and industrial lots, under an elaborate town planning system.

Here again, it does not come under the jurisdiction of the federal government to decide or even consider whether the company in question should have an elaborate town planning system.

That rests with the municipal authorities and the provincial authorities, as is the case in Ontario. Here, in Ottawa, when you talk about town planning, it concerns the municipality and the province, even if the federal government may put forward a few suggestions.

And further on, in the preamble:

Whereas the construction of a bridge and causeway over the St. Lawrence river in the area would contribute to such development and create employment: Therefore Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and the House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows:

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the construction of a bridge and a causeway over the St. Lawrence river would contribute to such development and create employment.

Now, what would be the length of this bridge, what would be its approximate cost?

Why is it that the federal government does not build a bridge which would span the St. Lawrence river and reach those islands where, no doubt, houses could be built in residential locations?

We do not object to the construction of a bridge by the federal government, but we are strongly opposed to the construction of a private bridge, with the agreement of the central government, sanctioned through a bill authorizing a company or an individual to become the owner of the bridge.

The first clause of the bill reads as follows:

Subject to the provisions of this act, Development Central Ville de l'Isle Inc. is authorized to construct, maintain and operate a bridge—

Mr. Speaker, this should imply that the bridge might be a toll bridge under the circumstances, that the company itself would have the right to establish the toll rate.

Mr. Rouleau: That can be amended.

Mr. Caouette: So I realize, but it has not been amended. We are discussing Bill S-41, from the Senate.

I continue reading clause 1:

—maintain and operate a bridge on the St. Lawrence river, linking the shore of 94th avenue, in the city of Pointe-aux-Trembles, Montreal, to the

[Mr. Caouette.]

shore of Ile-aux-Asperges, and causeway linking Ile-aux-Asperges and the shore of Ile Ste Therese.

At the same time, when referring to the explanatory notes, we find this:

The sole purpose of this bill is to authorize the company to construct a bridge and a causeway over the St. Lawrence river thus making possible the development of two islands lying within the harbour of Montreal.

The lands involved are presently used for farming but the project will make it possible to develop them into residential, commercial and industrial properties.

The bill contains the usual safeguards, namely, that the governor in council must approve the plans and location; the company must observe such regulations for the security of navigation as may be prescribed by the governor in council; and the usual time limits are placed on the commencement and completion of construction.

Mr. Speaker, we, in this corner of the house, cannot give our support to a measure of such importance.

We are in favour of private enterprise, but we recognize that there is such a thing as public property which belongs to the people and, as such, must be protected. Now, when we have a means to cross over a stream from one side to the other, it seems to me that belongs to the federal government, just like the bridges between the north and south shores of the St. Lawrence, be they located at Montreal, Valleyfield, Quebec city or anywhere else. Those bridges do not belong to private individuals or private enterprise but to the government.

As a matter of fact, as I pointed out a while ago, some of those bridges were built thanks to contributions from the municipalities, the provinces and the federal government.

I will now read section 2—

Mr. Boulanger: Mr. Speaker, will the hon. member for Villeneuve allow me to ask him a question?

Mr. Caouette: Certainly.

Mr. Boulanger: During his remarks, the hon. member talked about a bridge linking one shore of the St. Lawrence river to the other. I think the hon. member made a mistake, or else he exaggerated, because it is an island and there can be no question of from one shore to the other.

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, I will reply to my hon. friend from Mercier. The way he put his question, an island would not have any shore—

Mr. Boulanger: It is because the hon. member said from one shore to the other, implying "of the St. Lawrence river".

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, whether we go from the north shore to the south shore on