



Proceedings at the Legislative Council

TUESDAY, March 24.

(Continued.)

HON. DR. ROBINSON noticed that the Hon. the Leader for the Government had introduced another new feature into the discussion and wondered when the Council was going to get down to the real issue of a Bill the principle of which he heartily supported. He asked if he clearly understood the Hon. gentleman to say that the Government intended to help finance hotels or was he only speaking for himself.

HON. MR. MORINE replied that he was speaking what he understood to be the policy of the Government.

HON. DR. ROBINSON—This is putting some of us in a difficult position. I want to support this Bill, but it is so hedged around with new proposals and policies that it is difficult to know just where one stood.

HON. MR. POWER said he was a firm believer in the building of roads and the advantages they offer. He hoped to see this programme carried out and the money spent in a proper way. He knew of no better asset to a country than roads.

HON. THE PRESIDENT congratulated the House on the admirable debate which had taken place on the second reading of the Bill. He strongly favoured the Bill with the effort which it embodied to try and take this important matter out of politics. He proposed to make a few rambling remarks on various matters that had suggested themselves to him while on the second reading even if some of them might not be strictly general to the Bill. The first was the desirability of cleaning up the surroundings of the War Memorial on Customs House Hill. The condition at present was not a creditable one. He personally thought it would be necessary to shut off the area from vehicular traffic. Turn the place over and make it into something of which we would be proud. He had some criticism to make of Harvey Road, east of the C. L. B. Armoury, where a gaping hole had been made in taking out material for road-making. This ought to be filled in or the place ought to be closed off to connect the armoury. A third matter he wanted to ventilate was that of tourist fares. He thought this should be taken in hand promptly. He considered that legitimate taxi drivers should be protected from people who put private cars on the stand and then a schedule of fares should be arranged which would be just, both to drivers and the public. In connection with the Bill itself, he suggested that instead of starting construction on the West Coast at Port aux Basques and building a road through a virtual wilderness for the convenience of motor tourists who might or might not come in, building should be started at Corner Brook South, towards St. George's. Corner Brook would have a lot of people in the new paper town there, high paid officials and operators who would start motoring immediately we give them any roads to run their cars on and they would start importing cars at once and we would get the revenue out of them; whereas by the other policy we might get very little. Of course pressure would be put on the Government and

on the Commission from every quarter to have roads built in the areas whence the pressure comes. The House had two examples of that this afternoon; one in a letter from the Hon. the Minister of the Interior, down there including some very expensive bridges, all to be done this year and another from the West Coast for a still more ambitious programme based upon the preposterous proposition that it would mean 2,000 local and 1,000 tourist cars operating there in the next year or two.

The policy behind this Bill was all right if carried out on moderate lines, but might be disastrous if it was overdone. He didn't think we should be deferred from a modern construction by the fear suggested by Hon. Mr. Gibbs at a previous sitting that Nova Scotia would be lacking in a big road policy. As a matter of fact Nova Scotia had gone into this policy the past three or four years on a much bigger scale than we were planning. Nova Scotia had actually created a Ministry of Highways with a separate department for this work and spent 16 or 18 million in that time. As a result Nova Scotia with only twice our population, had over 20,000 motor cars last year against some 700 in this country. The figures were given in the Halifax Chronicle on March 7th and he had been greatly impressed by this amazing total. An Hon. gentleman had asked a day or two ago if the 50 million dollars spent in Ontario high roads were for motor roads. He (President) could say that they were motor roads. He had motored extensively over the Ontario roads during the past few years and had seen the actual construction of some of them. Many were roads of 100 feet wide through country districts and built on the most expensive scale by the Farmers' Government. They had added largely to increasing the public debt of Ontario 50 per cent. and had landed Peter Smith, one of the Farmers' Government in jail for three years and one or two of his colleagues narrowly escaped the same fate. That was the sort of thing we would have to avoid; extravagance in construction and any possibility of corruption in the administration of the monies to be spent under this Bill. The tourist policy was not a new one, the Reid's spent thousands of dollars in bygone years to develop a tourist traffic. The Lintrose had been built as a feature in it; the daily train service had started as another feature, and the Kyle as a third feature. Good results were secured until the War came; now it would be much more difficult for us to attract tourists because of the growth of the motor car as an agency in moving people about.

Just the same there was a chance for us to do something in this direction and he thought that if cautious methods were pursued satisfactory results would accrue.

HON. MR. MORINE said it had been a time honored custom to discuss both relevant and irrelevant points in connection with bills at the Committee stages. The things that had been discussed were far from wasting time, but were most illuminating and were having the desired effect, namely, outside notice. The rambling remarks of the Hon. President were very good and well taken. The Customs House Hill matter was one for the city to deal with. He did not know who had to do with the building of it, but it was not the Government. As to the road east of the C.L.B. Armoury that also was a matter for the City Council. He agreed with the Hon. the President's remarks about the regulating of taxi fares, but that also was a matter for the City Council. Also, he (Mr. Morine) thought that the legitimate taxi drivers should be protected.

He did not see how work on these roads could begin at Corner Brook at present. We should wait and see what the company is going to do first. He took exception to the remarks of the President as to the country through which the road starting at Port aux Basques would pass being a wilderness. It was wilderness in so far that it was virgin country, but soon the Codroy Valley was reached. Along this way were some salmon pools which would attract hundreds of tourists. He considered the term "wilderness" as applied to this section of the country fantastic. He would make no apology for reading the letters. All were important to the question. He would say now that he had authority for so doing, it was the Government's policy to assist in the establishment of an hotel in St. John's by giving financial aid, if necessary. He thought that was common property. As far back as 1898 when an idea similar to this was being considered and the subject of free entry of construction material was being talked of a terrible cry was raised about the unfairness to existing hotels. He contended that on the contrary, the class of people whom we were hoping to attract here would pull up at the expensive hotel, and that in no way would the other hotels suffer. They may indirectly benefit in case of an overflow. It was the purpose of the Government to assist financially in connection with the construction of such an hotel without which not much progress could be expected regarding the tourist traffic.

HON. DR. ROBINSON enquired what was meant by the term "financially."

HON. MR. MORINE replied it would

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not be in the nature of a subsidy, but probably a guarantee, but the exact nature of the financial assistance could not be determined until a definite proposition was made. As no proposition of the kind was at present before them it was impossible to discuss the details. The Bill under discussion had nothing to do with the financial support to be given to an hotel, and he did not wish to draw the attention of the Hon. Members away from the subject with which they were directly concerned.

HON. PRESIDENT considered the position of the Government with regard to the assisting in the building of a modern hotel, a sound one. He referred to information received from Mr. Massey that the Government of New Zealand ran some hotels itself. Many things, however, could be done in Australia and New Zealand which would not be possible elsewhere. Sir Patrick thought, and did not recommend such a plan for this country.

The question of what degree of help was to be rendered by the Government could not be determined until a concrete proposition was made. The different view taken by gentlemen of the Plant Line of a hotel here and of one in St. Pierre appeared curious. Sir Patrick made references to the hotels of Florida, which state had been practically built up by railways and hotels during the past 25 years. One could see in the streets in the city of Miami motor cars from every State in the Union, and he had met there Premier Murray of Nova Scotia, who had driven in his car from North Sydney right down to Florida. The Hon. gentleman referred to many of the hotels throughout Canada which were filled during the tourist season largely by visitors from the U.S. Not all hotels will pay, however. It was correct the Mount Royal was not paying at present. It consisted of 1028 rooms and was the largest hotel in the British Empire. The stock was down to 43 now, but it was thought that during the next five years it would be paying its way. It is sometimes thought that if hotels could not be filled the whole year they would not pay. This is not so. Some hotels only operate for three or four months during the vacation period, and can manage to make things pay. He was convinced that unless some financial assistance was given we will never get an hotel here.

HON. MR. BISHOP considered the debate on this Bill one of the most important, one of the best reasoned that had occurred during all the years he had been a member. If he had correctly gauged the scope of what was said by the hon. gentlemen who had discussed the Bill, all were in the main sympathetically inclined to see the plan carried out; but he expressed the feeling that more or less caution was necessary in the early stages of the enterprise. Rome was not built in a day; nor was all hoped for as regards the rush of tourist traffic to be expected at once. The Commission, which it was proposed to form, would have to meet many suggestions, probably similar to those of the hon. gentlemen already referred to. He had listened with attention and gratification to the different speeches given and papers read on this Bill, and he heartily supported the measure, but advised that necessary caution should be taken in the carrying out of the project.

HON. MR. GIBBS pointed out to the Hon. the Leader of the Government that no names were stated in the Bill, and no authority to work in corporate capacity. He also called attention to sections 13, 14, 15 and 16 which he considered abrogated to a certain extent.

(Continued on page 5.)

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