

Trans-Canada Highway Act
TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY ACT

**AMENDMENTS TO EXTEND PERIOD OF PAYMENTS
 AND INCREASE MAXIMUM EXPENDITURES**

The house resumed from Wednesday, March 30, consideration in committee of the following resolution—Mr. Walker—Mr. Flynn in the chair:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to amend the Trans-Canada Highway Act to extend until March 31, 1964, the period during which contributions or payments may be made to the provinces under the act and to prolong until December 31, 1963, the period in respect to which construction costs may be incurred under this act; and to provide also that the aggregate of all expenditures under the act may be increased to a maximum of four hundred million dollars.

Mr. Batten: Mr. Chairman, I should like to make a few remarks at this time concerning the trans-Canada highway. There is certainly no need to go into the history of the act itself as the committee is well acquainted with the history of the act from December 10, 1949. I should, however, like to point out that early in 1955 it became evident it would be impossible to complete this highway within the time limit which was then December 9, 1956.

On November 14 and 15, 1955, at a federal-provincial conference, this matter was thoroughly discussed and, as a result, the 1956 amendment to this act came about. During the debate of 1956, the then members of the opposition, now the government, had some very caustic comments to make. I am not going to quote those comments now, but I should like to make some general reference to them. At that time many members of the opposition referred to the need for more generous treatment of the trans-Canada highway program, particularly with reference to the amount of money being spent by agreement with the provinces. There was a good deal of discussion also concerning the maintenance of the trans-Canada highway after its completion.

Certainly we have now a fairly large number of miles of the trans-Canada highway completed and it will not be too long before the bills for maintenance will begin to come in to the provinces. As indicated in the debate of 1956, many Conservative members felt that as the cost of building the trans-Canada highway was too large for any province to carry, hence the cost of the maintenance of the trans-Canada highway would also be too large for many of the provinces to carry. There were those who then proposed that a greater share of the cost of building the trans-Canada highway should be borne by the federal government. Even though at that time the amendment to the act included a clause whereby 90 per cent of 10 per cent of

[Mr. Churchill.]

the mileage in any province would be paid for by the federal government, there were those who felt that this amendment to the act was not sufficiently generous.

Last year the act was further amended as to the amount of money to be included in the federal share and we have a similar action this time. Dealing with the government's second amendment to the Trans-Canada Highway Act, may I say I would have hoped that some consideration would be given to those provinces that are feeling the burden of carrying their share of the cost of the trans-Canada highway. I would also have hoped that some consideration would be given to the possibility of maintaining this road in a condition suitable for a trans-Canada highway in the future.

I think all of us will agree that there are some measures which, when offering a 50-50 deal to the provinces, are fair. But it is my view, as it always has been, that the 50-50 deal as far as the trans-Canada highway is concerned is not fair to all the provinces. If I may digress here for a moment, I might say that my own personal opinion was that there should have been built across Canada a trans-Canada highway completely paid for and completely maintained by the federal government. That is my personal opinion. I took that position when I was on the other side of the house. I took that position in the debate on the amendment last year and I still think that was the thing to have done. However, it was not done and we have arrived at this 50-50 deal which is in existence.

This 50-50 deal makes no allowance for the differences in mileages to be borne by the different provinces. It makes no allowance for difficulty in construction. It makes no allowance for the cost of materials which must be transported over long distances and sometimes imported into the province as in the case of Newfoundland. It makes no provision for the existence of alternative routes or for the per capita income of the provinces through which the road is to be built.

I think one thing about which we must be extremely careful is the fact that it makes no provision at all for the demand for other basic services which may exist in the provinces. In my own province of Newfoundland we have a tremendous demand for health and educational services. With these demands being as great as they are there is only a limited amount which the provincial government is able to spend on the trans-Canada highway, although it might be very much inclined to accept the agreement in order to get what they can out of this type of arrangement.

Many hon. members on the other side of the house have recognized these difficulties