

Trans-Canada Highway

realized that the building of a railroad was a national responsibility. I believe the government should realize that the building of a trans-Canada highway is also a national responsibility. We all realize that one of the important problems facing Canada today, as it faces almost every other nation in the world, is that of increasing our earnings of United States dollars. Coupled with that, we must seek every means possible to conserve our supply of United States dollars, and use our American dollars to the best possible national advantage.

We boast, and I think rightly so, that Canada's tourist attractions are the best in the world. We know that every year hundreds of thousands of our friends from the United States visit Canada because of these attractions with the result that the dollars spent by United States tourists in Canada have increased to the point where the amount earned from that source compares favourably with earnings from the export of wheat, newsprint, timber and other commodities. In 1948 United States tourists spent \$270 million in Canada. I believe if we had a proper trans-Canada highway the amount of money spent by American tourists would be greatly increased. At the same time there are large sums of money spent by Canadians travelling in the United States. We all know that if we want to make a journey from one point in Canada to another point a long distance removed, invariably the first thing we do is to go south into the United States as quickly as possible so that we may travel on their efficient highway system with speed and comfort. We remain on the United States roads as long as we can, and when we reach a point approximately due south of our Canadian destination we swing north and proceed to our destination from there. Not having an adequate trans-Canada highway, many Canadians are virtually forced to go through the United States and use their highway system.

The same thing is true when United States tourists visit Canada. If they desire to make a long journey from one Canadian point to another, they must go back home and use their own highways because our highways across Canada are almost intolerable. If we can judge from statistics that are made available from time to time, our United States dollar position is worsening. If we do not soon do something along the line of building a trans-Canada highway in order to improve our dollar position with the United States, we are going to have to adopt other measures that will not be nearly as palatable. I should like to point out that in the first eight months of 1949 the number of Canadian automobiles entering the United States for a period of

twenty-four hours or less increased by 26 per cent, and the number entering the United States for a period of more than twenty-four hours increased by 69 per cent. Therefore we see a growing demand on the part of Canadians for United States dollars for the purpose of travelling in the United States.

I say again that the building of a trans-Canada highway is important first of all to increase our earnings of United States dollars by means of greater tourist traffic created by United States citizens visiting Canada, and secondly to decrease the necessity for Canadians to travel through the United States to reach an ultimate Canadian destination. Many Canadians now do so merely because there is not a modern trans-Canada highway.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. Argue: Mr. Speaker, when the house rose at six o'clock I was dealing with the assistance that the construction of the trans-Canada highway would be, in solving our shortage of American dollars. I had pointed out that the dollar problem was a national problem and, since the trans-Canada highway would help solve that problem, it should be a national undertaking. One is tempted in this debate to state one's own position as to the route which should be followed. But I should like to point out at this time that the house is not going to decide the route of the trans-Canada highway. I think the minister would be wise to take the best engineering advice he can obtain and, in consultation with the provinces, reach an agreement as to the route the trans-Canada highway should follow.

From reading the correspondence between the minister and the government of Saskatchewan, and from statements made by the Saskatchewan minister of highways in the provincial legislature, I learn that it was generally understood at the December conference with the provinces that the trans-Canada highway was to be a four-lane highway and that the federal government's contribution towards building that highway would be much above 50 per cent. When the minister informed the house that the federal contribution would not be greater than 50 per cent, then it followed that we must be satisfied with a two-lane highway. A two-lane highway may be sufficient to meet traffic requirements in many parts of Canada, but wherever traffic is dense a four-lane highway would be required.