

*Northern Canada Transportation*

Alaska Highway. Since that time disintegration and decline have set in. It would appear that the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development concentrates on social engineering, telling people what to think and what to do, rather than on civil engineering. They have the roads branch over there in the figurative basement of the Department. I do not know whether the people in charge of roads ever get to speak to the Minister or the Deputy Minister. In the office of the roads branch they have a graph showing the amount of money, in real dollars or in constant dollars, spent on roads over the last 20 years or so. I can assure the House that it declines year by year. Road building now has no emphasis within that Department.

With the completion of the Liard Highway linking Fort Simpson in the Territories to Fort Nelson in British Columbia, there are now no major road building programs in progress in northern Canada whatsoever. That is a terrible state of affairs. We are losing the expertise in northern road building which has been built up over the years.

I should like to indicate some examples of what could be done. We could pave the Mackenzie and Alaska Highways. I am told by members of the trucking industry that this would probably result in a cost reduction of some 10 per cent to 15 per cent. A bridge is needed over the Mackenzie River. The cost of this was originally estimated some years ago at \$6 million. Today it might cost \$50 million. In years to come it will cost even more, unless we get it over with once and for all. Also there needs to be a southern access link into the town of Fort Smith, connecting it with the town of Fort McMurray in northern Alberta. This will be especially important if a dam is to be built close to Fort Smith on the Slave River, as is planned by the Province of Alberta.

We must extend the Mackenzie Highway, in the first instance, as far as Norman Wells where oil field expansion and development is presently being undertaken, and then on to the Mackenzie Delta and Inuvik. The Dempster Highway, which presently stops at Inuvik, must be extended to tidewater at Tuktoyaktuk to support the oil and gas industry there. Road construction will not only assist the oil and gas industry, but also the minerals industries and agriculture, an aspect of northern commerce which has been sadly neglected by the present Government.

There are many other sectors upon which I could touch, but I do not propose to do this for lack of time. I could talk about pipelines, electricity transmission lines, vehicles designed especially to go over muskeg areas and lighter-than-air craft. I could say what work has been done in the Province of Alberta with respect to this and describe the meetings I have had with the Hon. Henry Kroeger, the Minister of Transportation for the Province of Alberta who is enthusiastic about potential developments. I could talk about necessary research and development in all aspects of northern transportation, whether it be road construction techniques, ship designs or the need for better ice tanks and research facilities.

If we want to get out of the present economic difficulties we face in Canada, I think the development of transportation in northern Canada is one of the real ways. It is the real cure for

unemployment. It is not a make-work scheme or a NEED project; it is none of these things. It would put people to work doing real and sensible jobs. It would provide dividends for us in the years to come. I submit we must rekindle the flame of the Diefenbaker vision and bring all parts of Canada together, socially and economically, connected by a modern, effective, efficient, multifaceted transportation system.

**Mr. Jesse P. Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Motion No. 59, which reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of embarking on an ambitious program of upgrading transportation systems in Northern Canada.

Had the mover of the motion changed one word in the Motion, I think the Government would be prepared to support it. All he had to do was change the word "should" to "has", and I think we could have supported it. I hope my remarks will demonstrate to the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) that the Government has over the last decade embarked upon ambitious programs of providing efficient, affordable and safe transportation systems in northern Canada. I had the pleasure, together with the mover of this motion, to take part in the second major Northern Transportation Conference which was held in Whitehorse, Yukon, in October, 1982.

• (1630)

**Mr. Nickerson:** It was the Yellow-light Conference.

**Mr. Flis:** At that time, over 200 interested people, from industry and Government together with private citizens, sat down for three days to discuss the issues facing northern development, transportation systems and the environment in which all those components could come together.

The first Arctic Transportation Conference hosted by the present Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Chrétien) and the Hon. Don Jamieson in 1970, was in response to the recognized need for co-ordinated discussion of problems encountered in the Arctic. At that Conference, some of the topics discussed were Arctic aviation facilities, re-supply, the social and economic impact of transportation, railway development, pipelines and icebreaker support, terminal facilities in the Arctic and environmental impact. Now, 12 years later, many of the same issues were discussed but with a difference. This time, emphasis was placed on planning, regulatory concerns, research and development.

The first time an Arctic Conference sponsored by the federal Government took place was in 1970 but the Government and industry already had well developed interests in the North, recognizing its potential. We were making strong first steps at that time and we have come a long way since then. I do not think it was only a Diefenbaker vision that brought us to this stage, as the Hon. Member would lead this House to believe.

Efficiency and effectiveness were very serious concerns then as they are now. In 1983 we are even more serious. Much has