

Supply—Transport

operated between Vancouver Island and the mainland part of British Columbia. However, I and possibly some people who are not in this house might be less disposed to press the question of what some of us contend is a discrimination in the minister's shipbuilding subsidy proposal, if we knew this question of linking Vancouver Island was going to be put forward as a serious interest of the federal government.

I have no desire to pursue this matter at any great length at this time, but for the record I think it should be said at the outset that Vancouver Island has played quite an important role in respect of the development of Canada as we now know it. The founding by the Hudson's Bay Company of Fort Victoria in 1843 as a bastion, if you like, of the area of influence, at that time of course of Great Britain, can in many ways be argued as resulting in our now having a Canada from sea to sea.

It can also be argued, Mr. Chairman, that if this had not happened and we had allowed the encroaching influence of our American cousins to extend up the coast, as they certainly would like to have done, perhaps the problems of the Minister of Transport would be a little less difficult in some respects, but certainly Canada as we now know it would not be under discussion in this parliament.

I think it is not without some interest that back of that decision to establish Fort Victoria lay the question of whether or not our boundaries might have been along the Columbia River in the western part of the continent. In this connection our links with the eastern part of Canada go back quite a long way. Just to illustrate this point, Mr. Chairman, I should like to recount to the committee a story in respect of Fort Astoria which, as many hon. members probably know, was located at the mouth of the Columbia River by the American trading interests from the Atlantic coast.

● (7:50 p.m.)

At one point, just before the war of 1812, the Hudson's Bay Company had concluded a deal to buy Fort Astoria from the Astoria Trading Interests. They had actually hoisted the union jack atop Fort Astoria when the war of 1812 was declared. Orders were issued to capture any available enemy posts, and a ship of the Royal Navy was dispatched to Fort Astoria. The officer in charge decided he had to carry out his instructions to the letter. When he found that the union jack was flying over Fort Astoria, he insisted that the union

jack be lowered and the stars and stripes raised so that he could actually capture the fort. The result was that in the settlement of the war of 1812, when it was agreed that all territories held by either power before the outbreak of hostilities would be returned, the United States got Fort Astoria back, even though it had already sold to the Hudson's Bay Company.

I mention this, Mr. Chairman, as one of the reasons in the background of our history that this proposal for linking Vancouver Island in a modern transportation sense should be of interest and concern to the people in the east, or what was then Upper and Lower Canada. I hope that the members from this part of the country will be unanimous in their support of the plea I am making for the proposal to link Vancouver Island with the mainland.

I should like to point out to the minister that this is a very practical question. There is a lot of pressure building up in Vancouver Island over the fact that the people in the rest of Canada, with the possible exception of the island from which the Minister of Transport comes, can travel by automobile from one end of the country to the other on toll free highways, except of course for the tolls the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources levies going through national parks. There have been suggestions made from time to time in British Columbia that the tolls on the ferry system should be abolished.

This is an interesting suggestion, and I am sure the minister recognizes it would create practical problems. If there were no tolls, if it did not cost me \$7 for myself and my car to go from Nanaimo to Vancouver on that ferry, I would probably go a lot oftener. This would mean we would have to build an increasing number of ferries. I leave it to the minister's imagination to take into consideration the fact that the population of Vancouver Island is almost 300,000 and he can envisage just what kind of pressure that might create on the building of ferries and, incidentally, on the federal shipbuilding construction subsidy in respect of the building of the ferries that would be required.

This is a serious added cost to those who live on Vancouver Island. For example, if a man, his wife and four children want to start on a holiday, it is going to cost them \$34 to get back and forward from Vancouver Island before they go anywhere else in Canada. I am not going into the question of the added cost for the transportation of goods at this time.

[Mr. Barnett.]