

Adjournment Debate

Prime Minister to seek the truth that it may set him free of some of the suggestions which his answer indicates he has received. Indeed, if the Prime Minister's objective is to "see it as it is," I believe he will become a supporter of this project.

The corridor road is a straight line highway through the state of Maine from the province of New Brunswick and is created by the extension of Vanceboro-Lincoln road at the New Brunswick border to the outskirts of Sherbrooke, Quebec. Over such a road it would be some 400 miles from Fredericton to Montreal, compared with nearly 600 miles at the present time over Canadian highways or some 540 miles driving through the United States. In addition to the shorter mileage involved, the construction of the modern highway envisaged by the corridor road would create a modern, new, high-speed highway free of much of the strip development which impedes progress on large parts of most of our other highways, including the Trans-Canada Highway.

● (2200)

An investigation into the merits of the corridor road will, in my opinion, reveal it to be an important, indeed a vital component of any program for economic improvement of the region. A shorter route to the markets of Quebec and Ontario would give a tremendous impetus to highway transportation of all kinds, including freight haulers, furniture vans, tank trailers, car carriers, carriers of milled lumber and fresh and frozen fish products. It would improve our access to central Canadian markets and the port of Saint John, New Brunswick. It would also bring Canadians closer together in terms of distance.

I would like to quote a few paragraphs from an address by Colonel R. L. Houston, president of the Canada-Japan Trade Council, speaking at Saint John, New Brunswick, on the occasion of Port Day, Tuesday, May 1, 1973. He said:

Because of my conviction that you face great questions with ramifications that extend far beyond local boundaries, I would like to speak tonight of several tasks which I believe you will have to tackle as a region, if the work you do and the progress you make as a local community is to realize the greatest possible benefits.

You will have to tackle them collectively because, I suggest, the problems of economic development of Saint John are the problems of economic development of the Atlantic provinces, and these, in my estimation at least, are truly national problems with which all Canadians should be concerned. By acting together, you may be able to make this evident, and command a national effort necessary for their solution. But to do so, you will have to look on this as one region, and speak to the rest of Canada with one voice.

The old maxim "divide and conquer" may be a little strong in this context, but you should be aware that "divide and relieve the pressure" is still a rule practised by most popularly elected governments. If you succumb to the temptation of short-term advantage, you may find yourself pitted against your natural allies and end up a long-term loser.

I do not want anyone to end up a loser, Mr. Speaker. I want our entire region to move forward. We can make it happen in the Maritimes if we develop the arteries of commerce, the corridor road, our ports, our power potential and a system of modern highways which would bring the good things of our country to every corner of Atlantic Canada and, indeed, to Canada as a whole.

We need investment in the Maritimes to challenge the enterprise of our people, not handouts. I believe invest-

[Mr. Howie.]

ment in these arteries of commerce and the great infrastructures challenging Atlantic Canada will enable our provinces to take their place in the councils of our nation with dignity. I have asked the Prime Minister to investigate the merits of the corridor road, and if my expectations are met he will find it has great merit and should be placed high on the agenda when the next round of negotiations takes place with the United States of America.

It is not inconceivable that the building of the corridor road by the government of the United States could well be the *quid pro quo* forming part of a general agreement on a multiplicity of matters and could be accomplished without costing us a cent.

Mr. Ian Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I wish to respond to the question raised both by the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Howie) and by the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin) with regard to the feasibility of what one would call a main corridor between Quebec and New Brunswick.

This matter has been discussed in one form or another since the thirties. A referendum on the issue of bonds for the construction of a highway was turned down a few years ago by the voters of Maine. I am delighted to be answering tonight because I have a motion, number 57, on the list of private members' motions proposing a *quid pro quo*, the federal government spending money on the Alaska highway equivalent to what the Americans would spend building such a corridor across Maine. Thus we could get around the difficulty created by the Maine voters turning down the bond issue.

Officials of the Department of Transport have investigated two alternative routes which would connect the Sherbrooke and Fredericton areas by passing through the state of Maine. Both routes, bypassing the present Trans-Canada Highway, would be shorter and more direct than the Trans-Canada and either of them would undoubtedly prove of benefit to the maritime provinces.

It has been established that substantial benefits would accrue to any Canadian auto travellers or freight carriers who might use this route. I am personally convinced that there is no expenditure this government could make in the Maritimes that would have more long-term and immediate effect on the Maritimes than an arrangement with the United States government for the construction of such a corridor.

The second and more costly alternative would involve the construction of new highway sections in both Quebec and Maine so as to bypass a number of towns and shorten the distance. The total saving in distance could be from 125 miles to almost 200 miles depending on where you were going in New Brunswick. In fact, it would mean travelling to P.E.I. in seven or eight hours hard driving from Montreal and perhaps 12 to 13 hours from Toronto.

It is evident that in any decision eventually made regarding this highway there would have to be full consultation and agreement with all provinces affected by such a corridor, and this obviously would include Quebec and New Brunswick in particular. If the state of Maine through the State Department indicates its interest in the