

Supply—Transport

Minister in this house on April 13, as reported on page 3188 of *Hansard*, that following that report a formal request will be made for a full scale economic study by the federal government to determine the economic feasibility of the Chignecto canal. The Minister of Transport on May 26, 1959 indicated that a close study was being made by his department of the economic and engineering feasibility of this project. According to the Prime Minister, almost a year later, a formal request is being waited from the premier of New Brunswick for the federal government to undertake an economic study to determine the economic feasibility of the Chignecto canal. I ask the Minister of Transport to tell this committee where we stand. Was an economic study undertaken last year? What work has been done? What progress has been made? How is it that only a few weeks ago, notwithstanding the statements which had been made last year by the Minister of Transport, the Prime Minister advised this house that he had to receive a formal request from the premier of New Brunswick to undertake such a report?

I would remind the minister that the previous administration did not back out because of the cost of the construction of Camp Gagetown when it was decided that this establishment would contribute to the economy of the area. Instead of waiting for a pre-election announcement to coincide with the provincial election in New Brunswick, I ask the minister to advise the house now that the federal government is undertaking a full scale study in order to determine the economic feasibility of this canal. If, however, as he stated, such a study has been going on for the last two years, I ask the minister to make a progress report to this committee before this item of the estimates is passed.

The Chignecto canal is too important a project to the economy of the Atlantic provinces to be tossed around as a political football, as was done last year in connection with the Prince Edward Island causeway. If the construction of the canal is feasible and if it is economically sound the federal government should plan now—not next year but this year—for this construction at a time when such major capital projects are badly needed in order to alleviate this unprecedented unemployment situation in the Atlantic provinces.

Mr. Winch: I fully appreciate the fact that the minister would like before five o'clock to answer a number of the questions that have been raised. However, I hope I may have just two or three minutes in order to raise one other matter upon which I should like to hear the comment of the minister.

It is one which was not pointedly drawn to my attention until recently. I should like to hear from the minister as to what is the policy and the authority of his department on construction projects as far as they are concerned with the construction codes where the construction is taking place.

If my memory is correct, his department does construction mainly in two spheres, namely construction on property within a municipal border but where it is a crown construction or construction below the high water line. It is my understanding that his department takes the view that construction, even on municipal property or construction below the high water line, does not come under the construction or building codes of anyone whatsoever.

I believe this point came to the fore just last week in Vancouver where a certain construction under his department does not conform to the building code of Vancouver. I also understand that on a construction, if it is below the high water line or even if it is on the land side of the high water line, there is no requirement for inspection by building construction inspectors of the municipality or of the province.

I think an extremely important principle is involved here. I can remember what happened many years ago—I believe I was only 18 years at the time—when I was working as an apprentice electrician on a government job with no construction inspection by the city. I can remember one night when we were on the night shift the bin floor of the construction collapsed but by the grace of God nobody was hurt or killed.

The point upon which I should like to hear from the minister is this. I can see him looking at his watch. I should like to get clear from the minister this point. Why is it not correct or, if not, why is it okay that on a construction by his department on crown property, especially below the water line, they do not have to conform to the building code of the municipality or the city which is adjacent and why is there no inspection outside of his department's own engineers? There may be inspection by them but there is no inspection, as I understand it—at least that was the situation years ago when I was working on government projects—by city inspectors. I am personally of the opinion that the building codes of cities, municipalities and provinces should be adhered to and also that inspection of government projects should not just be done by the engineers or the contractors employed by his department or a government department but by those whose responsibility it is, away from the contracting