

Trans-Canada Highway Act

is not important, but if we multiply it by the number of Quebec citizens it runs up to \$35 million.

We, of the province of Quebec, are wondering why the premier of that province did not agree to come under the act. There are many Conservative members from that province here, but not one of them has risen in his place to express an opinion on the matter. We know that these hon. members would jeopardize their position if they did express an opinion. I am urging them in any case to endeavour to find a compromise, so that the Quebec premier might accept that agreement.

Mr. Chairman, I should now like to direct but a few questions to the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Green) and offer him a few suggestions. I should like, first of all, to ask him to put aside the sums of money which it would cost to build the 413 miles of highway in the province of Quebec; I would ask him to do so in accordance with the procedure used in regard to assistance to the universities and, when we have a government which is favourable to the development of a highway system in the province, we shall then be in a position to accept them.

I would also ask the minister to get in touch with the Quebec premier in order to inform him of that proposal designed to improve the terms of that legislation, and to ask him whether he is prepared to agree to it. If the minister cannot get in touch with him in writing he could at least send him a telegram in order that we may obtain a reply as soon as possible.

Those are the few remarks I had to make about this resolution. I would have liked the Conservative members of the province of Quebec to tell us what they think of it, and to explain to us why the province of Quebec is turning its back on that assistance. Back home, we say it is because of autonomy—

Mr. Tremblay: It is up to you to ask the question.

Mr. Boulanger: —we would be happy to know. That is why I am asking the Conservative members from the province of Quebec to express their opinion on the matter. We would be curious to know what arguments they would use in explaining to their fellow citizens that the federal government is impinging on a field reserved to the province. It is up to you Conservative members from the province of Quebec to give an opinion.

Mr. Habel: Mr. Chairman, I do not intend to stretch this debate. We have already had some good explanations from the minister, and other members have taken part

[Mr. Boulanger.]

in the discussion. They were mostly members from the opposition, because like the hon. member who spoke before me, I noted that Conservative members from my native province have kept quite silent. However, I trust that none of them will have to call me to order, because I have no intention of discussing the trans-Canada highway of the province of Quebec.

An hon. Member: There is none.

Mr. Habel: I shall be satisfied with reaching to the border. In the constituency that I have the honour to represent, we have the only trans-Canada highway in existence since 1946. It has been improved in the last few years. I think the Department of Public Works, the federal government and those same hon. gentlemen who, when they were in the opposition, kept telling the former government that it should be more generous in its contributions for the construction of the trans-Canada highway should now seriously consider helping in the construction and completion of the second trans-Canada highway in the province of Ontario.

I was saying that we have the only trans-Canada highway now existing. In fact, up to 1949, the only trans-Canada highway in existence was highway 17, between Ottawa and North Bay, highway 11 between North Bay and Cochrane, and highway 11 between Cochrane and Nipigon, Port Arthur and Fort William. Today, in addition to being the only highway, it is the only highway that can be used in Canada by transport trucks. In 1949, as I recall it, the provinces were allowed to choose the location of the highway. In 1950, the premier of Ontario was seen to change the location of the trans-Canada highway to make it go through every constituency represented by a minister of his cabinet, which substantially shifted its course from the already existing highway.

I would ask the minister to review the situation and to see whether a contribution might not be made to the completion of a second section which, I would say, is already 75 per cent completed. As was stated by the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters), heavy motor transports are using this highway on a year-round basis at the present time. In fact, it can be said that 75, and even up to 250 transport trucks use it daily. Maintenance of this highway is costing the province a lot of money.

I think the province of Ontario may have previously filed a request with the Department of Public Works, for a contribution for the completion of that highway.