

Government Orders

• (1700)

I think my credentials in following the fixed link go back quite a way. My great grandfather James Stewart was the premier of Prince Edward Island. This was talked about in the family when he was the premier of Prince Edward Island. That side of the family has talked about it for the better part of a century. On the other side of my family, my great-grandfather Peter Mitchell was the premier of New Brunswick at the time of Confederation. That side of the family has talked about this so-called missing link since this country began. The country has been well served by the marine ferry service back and forth.

We listened with care on this side to the Minister of Public Works when he said that this is a private sector project. That is a crock, Mr. Speaker. You and I know it. The government plans to give \$42 million a year in fixed 1992 dollars to this corporation, 70 per cent of which is owned outside of Canada in the United States and Britain. No one wants to talk about that.

I looked back through press clippings and noticed that as recently as 1990 this project was touted throughout the maritimes as \$600 million. By 1991 it was \$700 million. By 1992 it was \$800 million. The minister in his remarks was talking \$800 million. But when you open the bill, and I hope Canadians read it, it says \$42 million in inflation protected 1992 dollars for the next 35 years. I am sorry to the government and to the Liberals, but I can multiply. That comes to \$1.47 billion if you keep it at 1992 fixed inflation protected dollars. It has risen from \$600 million to \$1.5 billion in two years.

Who is in this consortia? This is a private sector driven project, but they have driven their snouts right into the trough. This is double. The Auditor General should be looking back through the marine accounts right now. The Government of Canada is only giving \$21 million and a little bit more to the ferry connection to P.E.I. right now. How does it suddenly leap? Here we get a 100 per cent leap of faith to \$42 million times 35 years. And what will we inherit if this monstrosity is built? Thirty-five years from now we know it will be a rusting hulk hanging out there over the water. Anyone who has driven across the Lion's Gate Bridge, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Fauna Bridge or any of these other bridges knows if you are near salt water the concrete is going to decompose.

The steel superstructure, all of the superstructure and the asphalt is all going to disintegrate.

So the minister says that is wonderful. It will be fully amortized after 35 years and we Canadians will get to inherit a rusting hulk when it is hitting its critical years for reconstruction. The most you can get out of a bridge of this kind on planet earth in a high energy atmosphere is a century. No one has even lived that long to find out if that is true.

We will inherit a rusting hulk, all the debt and all the maintenance problems. The minister, whom I like dearly, tells us in this House that this is a private sector project. This makes me want to vomit. Every single voter in Prince Edward Island should be infuriated at the kind of hoax that is being perpetrated and perpetuated on the floor of this House. People in New Brunswick should be livid that this kind of crap is being hornswoggled around in the House of Commons and jammed at the people of the maritimes. I think they should be outraged and they should throw every single member of Parliament out who has anything to do with this because it is a hoax.

This has never been environmentally assessed. There are these so-called ice experts but that is not the only ground upon which this project was turned down. Let us look at some of the material. Let us look at what the minister's colleague, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans said publicly. He said if the fishermen opposed the project he would have it blocked. Well, let me read from a fax I received today from Buck Watts, the president of the P.E.I. Fishermen's Association. This resolution was duly passed less than a month ago in Charlottetown. It states: "The P.E.I. Fishermen's Association is opposed to the construction of a bridge to the mainland until further and more appropriate environmental study has taken place. We suggest an environmental review panel as advocated by the group Friends of the Island".

Where is the minister of fisheries? He promised the bridge would be blocked if they opposed it. Of course that is along the way. Somebody speaks out and you just throw a little bit of political oil on the waters I suppose. In 1990 the scientists in maritime Canada said: "No higher fishing quotas". This same minister of fisheries overrode that and increased the quota allowance by 50 per cent. In 1993 we have no cod fishery.