

Mr. James A. Christiansen:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Honourable members of the Senate Tourist Traffic Committee, I should like first of all to commend Commissioner Phinney on his splendid report.

Some Hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. CHRISTIANSEN: That was very sweet music to us westerners.

I am on a most important mission, to solicit the immediate assistance of our governing bodies at Ottawa. The existing Alaska Highway is no longer a question mark, but is a MUST on the agenda of the people of North America for their protection. That part of the accepted Highway which is the subject of my mission is vitally important "unfinished business".

Though the cost will be relatively small, it is the most important piece of highway construction confronting North America at this moment. The requirement is a modern, hard-surfaced highway from Edmonton to Dawson Creek, B.C., to complete the Alaska Highway link between Coutts, Alberta, on our southern international boundary and Fairbanks, Alaska.

I would like, on behalf of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, to convey to your Committee an expression of appreciation for the opportunity, the privilege and pleasure of placing before you its views on a matter of extreme importance to all Canadians.

It is in the capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Alaska Highway, Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, that I appear before you now. I am not delegated to foster any selfish motives for the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce or any other body. Edmonton, because of its geographical position, is looked to by many parts of the West, and by other parts of Canada, for leadership on this subject. We Edmontonians willingly accept that challenge and responsibility and do so in the knowledge that our governments, provincial and federal, seek, and should have the support of public opinion. I am well-fortified today with such desire—a desire to co-operate to the end that some of our major national problems may attain a satisfactory solution.

The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce believes that in the efforts and recommendations of your Committee may well rest the solution to some of such major problems, one of which is certainly our unfavorable trade balance with the United States, our great neighbour to the South. The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce believes that an increase in tourist trade is the leading answer; that the beauty of our country, our fishing and hunting is one of the best exports we have to offer the United States and its travel-minded people. It is estimated that six billions of dollars were spent in the United States by tourists in 1940; that in the State of Michigan alone, home of the motor industry, the tourist trade stood second only to the motor industry in that year. If only a small percentage, say 10 per cent, of the American tourist trade could be diverted to Canada, which we feel can be done, our trade balance with that country would be placed in a favourable position. We want American tourists to come to Canada, but we must do something to induce them. Quoting my own experience—business takes me to many parts of the United States. Wherever I go there I am continually told by Americans that they want to visit Canada, every part of our country. Many wish to travel over the Alaska Highway, to visit our North Country and Alaska. We have much of tourist interest to offer them and many of them will eventually settle in our great Northwest.

For these and other reasons, the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce believes that the Alaska Highway situation should be embraced by the efforts of your Committee.

The Alaska Highway was built by the United States at great cost—a great achievement, accomplished many years ahead of normal developments in that area. It has, so far, been invaluable in the building and maintaining of airports