

*Trans-Canada Highway*

particularly important problem is an essential part of any advance that is made in this extremely vital undertaking.

I have said already that this problem is not one which is met only in western Canada. The problem is met in Ontario, in Quebec and in certain parts of the maritime provinces, although the lengths involved are perhaps not as considerable as those involved in western Canada.

This does call for a display of co-operation of very high order. I think it must have impressed the minister, and I know it has impressed others who have read the briefs that have been put forward, that those who have put forward arguments in regard to one route or another have all made it clear that their main concern is to see a trans-Canada highway built. They are advocating a particular route and undoubtedly will continue to press their point of view until a decision is made. My feeling is that the sooner the dominion government and the ten provincial governments can get together and reach agreement as to the formula, the more hope there will be of making these decisions upon which the completion of this great highway must depend. The longer the decision in regard to that formula is deferred, the more appeals to local loyalties will be effective in establishing a strong opinion in regard to one route or the other. In the very nature of activities of that kind certain loyalties to a particular idea become firmly embedded and it is then more difficult to reach a satisfactory decision in regard to a matter of this kind.

There are many hon. members who feel that there is a too frequent reference to the need of a general dominion-provincial conference, but I submit that until there is a general dominion-provincial conference to settle the vital questions of the allocation of responsibilities and of taxing powers in the wider fields, an attempt to reach satisfactory conclusions in regard to some of these problems is simply hopeless. I repeat that unless some decision is reached as to the way in which the provinces are going to have assured sources of revenue other than those which they now have, an offer by the dominion government to assume fifty per cent of the cost of constructing a trans-Canada highway will simply mean that the construction of that highway will be delayed for a long time.

There are some provinces which could not under their existing financial arrangements today assume the additional cost that would be involved in this great undertaking. Therefore, as we deal with this particular problem that all of us want to see solved,

I again urge upon the government the necessity of reaching at an early date an understanding with all provincial governments as to how their financial responsibilities in the broad administrative and legislative fields are going to be divided and how they are going to be carried out. Without that, this problem, along with a number of other things, will be delayed for some considerable time no matter how keen the desire of the minister or of any hon. member may be to see them brought to an early result.

Let us not forget that this is an expenditure which will bring great returns to Canada. In addition to the strategic aspect, with which the dominion government is particularly concerned, a satisfactory trans-Canada highway with a good surface across the whole country will facilitate the distribution of products of all kinds as well as provide an opportunity to Canadians to move back and forth. In addition it will make it possible for our friends from the United States to take increasing advantage of the tourist facilities we have and it will afford us an opportunity of receiving from them an increasing number of the dollars which they bring with them.

Throughout all time the existence of modern highways has been one of the evidences of national development. The observations I have made have been made in the hope that effective steps will be taken at an early date to give to this country as suitable transportation on the ground as we have today by rail and air. We should not be satisfied in Canada until we have a highway that makes it possible for us to make use of the most modern means of transportation to go from one side of Canada to the other.

**Mr. H. R. Argue (Assiniboia):** Mr. Speaker, my first word in this debate will be one of approbation of the resolution presented to the house by the minister. The time has long since passed when the federal government should accept some responsibility in the building of a trans-Canada highway. Long years ago the fathers of confederation decided that it was necessary for the future development of Canada that there should be a link from one coast to the other by means of a trans-Canada railroad. We have long needed a trans-Canada highway to link by this new means the people from one coast to the other.

For more than thirty years the automobile has been in popular use. We have seen automotive transportation increase in popularity until today a large part of our freight is carried by trucks travelling on our highways. Increasing numbers of people are using the automobile as a means of transportation and communication. The fathers of confederation