

Trans-Canada Highway Act

11. To assist the individual owner of a motor vehicle to operate same more economically. It is being suggested that there will be four million vehicles operating in Canada by 1960 if adequate roads are provided.

I think that figure is already exceeded at this time. I continue:

It has been proved, by test, that it costs one half cent per mile more to operate a car on gravel than it does on pavement. It therefore costs an individual who drives his car 20,000 miles in a year, \$100 extra; a national economic loss of possibly \$100 million a year.

The brief goes on to state:

The United States long ago realized the necessity of national assistance in the building of an adequate highway system and that is why today we find excellent hard surfaced highways extending from coast to coast, and through areas as sparsely populated as northern Ontario.

Northern Ontario has been one of the problem districts so far as building the trans-Canada highway is concerned. The brief continues:

The history of the United States federal highway development is a revelation to most Canadians.

We will admit we are 50 years behind in our development in this respect but if we were to read the history of legislation in the United States and what has been accomplished I think we would learn a great deal. We could use the experience of the United States not only in legislation but as an illustration of the co-operation between the federal government and the states as well as in the administration of highway programs and in the methods used in the building of highways.

The brief deals with the extensive highway system in the United States and refers to the system of highways being developed in Mexico. Anyone who has been to Mexico knows that this relatively poor country from the point of view of Canada's wealth of resources has done a great deal more with its resources in the development of a national highways system than has been done in Canada to date.

This brief written in 1945 urges the dominion government to embark on a program similar to the United States federal aid program providing for the development of a national highways system.

Later on the board of trade of southeastern British Columbia—a most progressive and alert body—made representation to the federal government with respect to the southern trans-provincial highway, being made a part of a national highway system. The latest representations, I understand, have been made by the automobile association of Canada to the present government. They presented an excellent brief. All these representations indicate the growing need for

[Mr. Herridge.]

action on the part of the federal government to do something more than has been done in the past.

I will read the concluding paragraph of the brief of the automobile association of Canada to this government:

The Canadian Automobile Association, as a result of these facts and observations, requests the federal government to convene a conference of the federal and provincial governments and representatives of the major municipal governments that would have as its objectives (1) the examination of all matters commented upon in this submission, especially consideration of a national system of highways for Canada; (2) the desirability or otherwise of establishing a continuing body, to be composed of the representatives of federal, provincial and municipal governments, that would act in a consultative capacity, and would make recommendations to the respective governments on the most efficient policies that would serve the national interest in highway construction and administration; (3) the examination and study of present financial responsibilities of governments for road building that would assist governments in accurately assessing this aspect of their mutual financial problems and which would help in the broader field of dominion-provincial fiscal relations; (4) the formulation and projection of road and street programs that would best serve the national interests.

We in this group have no hesitation in supporting the representations of this association. Here is another illustration of the changing circumstances in 50 years. Fifty years ago the members of automobile associations were largely those in the upper crust, the more fortunate in society. What do we find today? The great bulk of members of these associations are working people so when the Canadian Automobile Association makes representations to the government of Canada it does so on behalf of a widespread section of the Canadian people and in so doing does not represent any particular class or interest but a national need.

In drawing my brief remarks to conclusion, I urge the government to take action as quickly as possible in completing the present trans-Canada highway. Meanwhile, a conference with the provinces should be called to prepare for a national highways policy with a view to establishing by mutual agreement and in co-operation, a policy for the building of a national highways system to meet our present needs, to assist in the promotion of the economic development of Canada and provide opportunities for what I would term some massive planning to meet the seasonal unemployment that occurs from time to time in this country.

Mr. Forbes: Mr. Chairman, I wish to express my approval of this resolution to provide funds for the completion of the present trans-Canada highway, but I am of the opinion that we should be providing more money to start a second trans-Canada highway. In view of the fact that the present