

Trans-Canada Highway

thought to be asking for "all this and heaven too", but I am suggesting that provision should be made now so that a proper ferry will be available if and when the highway is built.

I have looked over the correspondence in this connection which was tabled. This correspondence sets out the standard of road that will be built. The details accompanied a letter to the premier of Newfoundland dated September 2, 1949. I take it that these standards will form part of the bill that is to follow and therefore it is proper to discuss them now. Apparently the government plans only a two-lane highway. I do not suppose Newfoundland itself would require more than a two-lane highway, but a military road would have to be wider. The intention is that if any province builds a road wider than two-lane the federal government contribution will be 50 per cent of the cost of a two-lane highway rather than 50 per cent of the total cost of the road.

Apparently the right of way is to be 100 feet in width with a 22 or 24 foot pavement. The shoulders are to be 10 feet and the minimum thickness of asphalt is to be three inches. The stone base will be from a nine-inch minimum to 12 inches. There will be a maximum curvature of six degrees and a maximum gradient of six degrees. The sight distances, horizontal and vertical, are to be a minimum of 600 feet. Bridges are to have an overhead clearance of 14 feet with a width of 26 feet for spans of over 30 feet, and curbs of 18 inches.

These are not my own figures. I do not know about these matters myself, but I discussed it with an hon. member who is engaged in the road-building business and who knows something about costs. I described as well as I could the terrain that would be encountered and the nearest approximate cost figure I could get was in the neighbourhood of \$100,000 per mile. As I see it, the minimum distance would be 500 miles, which means that the share of the poor province of Newfoundland will be quite steep. I do not know about the wealthy provinces up here, but if we have to find \$25 million as our share, it is going to be a little hard.

Then apart from the original cost the province must maintain the highway, and I understand that maintenance costs are fairly high. I hate to be considered begging all the time but I am a little worried about this part of it. We like to play our own part in Newfoundland and I would not advise taking on a job that we cannot handle properly. We do not want to be always coming around asking for more.

Another angle to this road construction business is the assistance that it will give

[Mr. Higgins.]

to relieving unemployment. Frankly I do not like the idea of this cost being as high as it will be, but even though it will assist unemployment I cannot see how we are going to find \$25 million unless some wizard comes along and pulls it out of a hat. Unemployment has recently been taken care of by the provincial government by the payment of \$13.20 for a 48-hour week. Can you imagine in this day and age that in one of our ten provinces a family man is receiving only \$13.20 for 48 hours of work. It is easy to see what is going to happen. The family allowance cheques that are being received in Newfoundland will be used for purposes never intended by the act. I am quite worried about that and I am sure all hon. members from the province are in the same state of mind. I probably got a little off the point in this discussion, but I thought I should mention this matter.

From the correspondence the minister had with our premier it would appear that the subject of the resolution has been discussed. This letter was dated September 2, 1949, but I was rather confused by noting a Newfoundland newspaper report dated October 1. This report referred to the visit of the premier of Newfoundland to Ottawa and the discussion he had had with the minister with regard to a highway. There is a headline, "Twenty feet wide road to be built from Port aux Basques to city", and the premier is reported to have said:

Thanks to the help offered by the federal government, we'll have a paved highway from St. John's to Port aux Basques, with a minimum of a twenty-foot pavement and two-foot shoulders on either side.

Then the premier is reported to have said further:

I don't guarantee that the paving itself will be completed within our first term of office, but the road itself will be completed and a great deal of its pavement will be laid. In addition there will be many miles of secondary roads constructed.

There seems to be confusion of thought in this matter. This resolution contemplates legislation which will follow a decision by the provinces concerned. If the premier is reported correctly it would seem that he had more or less accepted the proposal. I notice down at the bottom of this same newspaper another article which reads:

Work in connection with the survey of the western section of the proposed trans-Canada highway is progressing satisfactorily, and a party under T. H. Winter which commenced work at Robinson's on September 5 has now moved to McKay's.

These are places on the west coast.

It is understood that the work will be pushed forward and as much as possible completed before winter sets in.