

Over the period of a week this would allow one additional trip per vehicle per week through the saving in time. The corridor road would bring the Atlantic provinces and the industrial centres of Quebec and Ontario much closer in terms of distance and time.

The construction of the modern highway envisaged by the corridor road linking the Atlantic provinces and the great markets of Quebec and Ontario through the state of Maine appears to be an important, indeed a vital component of any program for economic improvement of the region. Freight haulers, furniture vans, tank trailers and car carriers would gravitate to the corridor road. Truck transportation of milled lumber would also benefit in savings and cost of operation over the shorter route. Reduced freight rates for the movement of maritime products westward and on eastward shipments designed for the Atlantic market, or through our winter ports to the international markets of the world, would benefit producers and shippers. Fresh and frozen fish products from the maritimes could compete with imported products in central Canadian markets and the reduced prices for these goods would be a direct benefit to all consumers.

A shorter route to the markets of Quebec and Ontario would give tremendous impetus to highway transportation of all kinds, including tourist traffic, and would provide competition for our rail lines. Many low-class bulk commodities now tied to rail and water transportation could look to new market potential. Militarily, there is an advantage of the utmost importance in linking the United States with the great military base at Gagetown and the naval and air bases of the Maritimes.

To construct such a road would probably be expensive. In much of this territory where no previous road exists I would estimate it would be in excess of \$200,000 a mile if built to the same standards as the Trans-Canada Highway. The improvement of any sections of existing low-standard roads would probably cost less, and improvement of a better paved road that could contribute to the highway would be less still. My estimate, based on slight research, puts the cost at about \$60 million.

Maintenance due to the terrain and the climate would probably be comparable to maintenance of roads in New Brunswick. Big questions to be solved are, who would pay for the road, construct it and maintain it? With the American interest in talks about to take place with respect to international trade and tariffs, the auto pact, resource development and transportation, it seems that now is an appropriate time to place this subject on the agenda for discussion with our American friends.

It is my view that such a road would be welcomed in the state of Maine, but that state does not have the funds to build it. In my opinion, a road which would benefit two countries might well be constructed on a shared-cost basis. The first step, the important step, involves negotiations with the United States of America and the state of Maine. It is important that this matter be raised now. If this government has any intention of even considering the matter, negotiations should start now. If we envisage discussion on a bundle of rights covering a number of topics, this could well be the quid pro quo forming part of a general agreement on a multiplicity of matters.

Adjournment Debate

I say to the government: Do your homework well, and do it now. We have already lost much time; there has been too much talk and too little action. We can make things happen in the Maritimes if we develop the arteries of commerce—the corridor road, our ports, the power potential in the tides of Fundy, the Chignecto canal and the P.E.I. causeway. We need investment in the Maritimes to challenge the enterprise of our people, not handouts. Invest in these arteries of commerce and development will follow as day follows night, and it will follow without handouts. Our people could then live in prosperity and dignity.

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity of replying to the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Howie). I am always very interested in his suggestions. I find no difficulty in acknowledging that there is need for particular DREE assistance in the Atlantic provinces both in terms of infrastructure and support and incentive grants to local industries.

The policies of regional development are important to the economic well-being of that region, just as they are to Quebec and other parts of Canada which have not developed over the years to their fullest potential. The hon. member has referred to the failure of this policy. I do not agree with this conclusion, because I think there is growing evidence which shows marked improvement in the economy of the Atlantic region. However, I agree that we need improvement.

I am aware of a considerable increase in investment in manufacturing. I know that the employment rate has been growing gradually over the past four years. I also know that unemployment has continued to plague this area, but there has been a marked reduction in the outmigration of people from the maritimes, and it is encouraging to see a closing of the gap of the average income in the Atlantic compared to the national average.

I believe that Atlantic Canada's economy is starting to expand on the basis of the development of viable, long-term economic opportunities. Infrastructure projects are considered on their merits, and if they are sound and desirable they receive full consideration. I think our colleague from York-Sunbury will agree that since he asked this question of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Jamieson) over two months ago considerable progress has been made. I refer not only to the recent announcement of a DREE grant of over \$2.5 millions to reopen the textile mill at Marysville, but also to the extensive federal-provincial co-operation regarding DREE involvement in all provinces which has been undertaken by the minister.

● (2210)

[Translation]

PUBLIC WORKS—CONSTRUCTION OF NEW POST OFFICE AT LAC MÉGANTIC—INQUIRY AS TO DATE OF TENDERS

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, on May 23 last, I put a question to the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Dubé) with regard to the federal building there has