

Trans-Canada Highway Act

Columbia is going to be behind in its work and take much longer than was expected—I am not criticizing British Columbia on that account—and if it is going to be some considerable time before the first trans-Canada highway is completed, and this may apply to other provinces, does my hon. friend expect me to misinterpret the plain language of the Prime Minister's statement to a nationwide audience that when the trans-Canada highway is completed we will consider a second trans-Canada highway?

A number of hon. members have made magnificent speeches advocating a second trans-Canada highway. The hon. member for Saskatoon, the hon. member for Churchill, the hon. member for Dauphin, the hon. member for Kootenay East and the hon. member for Levis have all suggested a second trans-Canada highway. But let me say this. With all the work still to be done on the first trans-Canada highway, let us put our house in order and complete it first. May I also say that our consideration then will not necessarily cover, as my friend suggests, only a second trans-Canada highway. We will consider a national highway policy when the time comes, something that will encompass more than just another highway, but that date is in the future. I know that the provinces are trying to do their best but if they will even accelerate their best a little more and complete the trans-Canada highway sooner we will then be in a position to go further in our consideration, which is as much as the Prime Minister has said we will do.

Mr. Bourget: I am sorry to interrupt the minister—

Mr. Walker: If the hon. member for Levis will wait, I will only be a moment. When the Prime Minister says that there have been preliminary discussions, may I say that we have literally spent hours with our chief engineers in charge of the trans-Canada highway and with other members of the cabinet in carrying on at great length what could be termed preliminary discussions. However, I want to assure all hon. members who are so enthusiastic that this is not the time to make any pronouncement or even to go further than we have. My hon. friend will appreciate this. May I also say that I appreciate the contributions of hon. members. It shows that they are quite satisfied with the present first trans-Canada highway because there has been little or no criticism of it and most of the speeches have been confined to advocating a second trans-Canada highway. For that, of course, I want to thank hon. members.

Mr. Howard: May I pose a question to the minister? To my knowledge this is the first

time that anyone on the government side has said that the government is not going to give any consideration to a second trans-Canada highway until the first one is completed. That is substantially what the minister has said. I am quite sure that those who are interested in the building of a second trans-Canada highway, especially those from the northern parts of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, will be most disappointed that the representations they have made up to now have been given no consideration.

Mr. Walker: Apparently my friend cannot understand English because I said, as the Prime Minister himself has said, that we have already had preliminary discussions on the subject.

Mr. Howard: With whom?

Mr. Walker: I have already given that answer.

Mr. Howard: You have had no preliminary discussions with anybody unless you have been talking in your sleep because, as the Prime Minister said, the only people you can have discussions with about the building of such a highway are the provinces and the Prime Minister said that you have not had any discussions.

Mr. Walker: I always consider the source when the hon. member for Skeena sometimes asks questions or makes statements that do not even beget a polite answer. In this instance he does not want to know the truth. He wants to distort anything he hears. Therefore I refuse to waste the time of the house by engaging in a veritable competition with the hon. member.

Mr. Howard: Let me say to my kindly friend that he may refuse to do a lot of things. However, he must appreciate that when he becomes a cabinet minister he is not an entity unto himself and a dictator but rather he is in the hands of the house.

Mr. Walker: Do you still want me to come to Skeena?

Mr. Howard: The minister can come to Skeena anytime. Certainly if he comes at the time of the year when the fishing is good I will make sure that he has the opportunity to go to some of the finest fishing spots in Canada and he will not go home empty-handed.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): He had better come to Essex county.

An hon. Member: Why don't you go fishing right now?