

Trans-Canada Highway

credit should be used for this project. By doing so the government would get away from much of the difficulty to which we have been objecting in the past.

I repeat that I am not advocating acceptance of the Yellowhead route without first having the decision of competent engineers appointed for the purpose.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the house to adopt the motion?

Mr. Fournier (Hull): Mr. Speaker, one word before the motion carries. The moment the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra (Mr. Green) made the request for the tabling of correspondence I sent a note to my colleague's office in which I stated:

I understand the minister undertook to file this morning correspondence with the provinces. Would you be kind enough to have these documents sent to me in the house immediately so that I may table them.

I received this reply from the minister's office:

Upon Mr. Higgins' request for the tabling of up-to-date correspondence the minister agreed it would be tabled today. The correspondence is still in process of being prepared, and will be tabled as soon as it can possibly be prepared.

This note is signed by the secretary. I will undertake at some time today, as soon as the documents are prepared, to table them, so that the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra will have them for the discussion of the bill.

Mr. Black (Cumberland): I wonder if the minister would check on the correspondence with Nova Scotia. There is correspondence with that province, but the minister has not yet had authority to make it public. This correspondence is important to us, and it is important to all hon. members that it be made available. I would ask that it be checked up, even to the extent of communicating with Nova Scotia to see if they would not consent to release.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I shall check the matter with the minister's office. I understood, however, that the correspondence to be tabled would be that to which the provinces had agreed. If they do not agree, I would not wish to commit the minister to the tabling of it.

Mr. Black (Cumberland): My request is that a further check be made with Nova Scotia to see if they will not release the correspondence in connection with the trans-Canada highway.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I will do that.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. Dion in the chair.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Chairman, I understand the proposal made is that the discussion be deferred, in view of the fact that the minister is unable to be here today. There are, however, certain points which have not yet been covered, and concerning which questions could have been asked at this committee stage, before considering the bill on second reading.

I suggest that on the motion for second reading of the bill the minister should make a statement which would contain, in addition to anything else he may have to say, information as to provisions for maintenance; any information he has in regard to the route to be followed; any information as to other arrangements, if any, beyond the provision of fifty per cent of the cost of construction, and the decisions, if any, which have been made as to payment for past work.

I make this statement now so that it may be communicated to the minister, thus avoiding the necessity of delay later, or the asking of questions on the motion for second reading. An examination of the correspondence demonstrates that no positive decision has been made in this matter. The situation can be fairly well summed up in the letter of September 9 from Premier Smallwood of Newfoundland, who writes briefly that they are desirous of proceeding with this matter and closes by stating:

This is merely to acknowledge your letter, and to say that we are anxious to be in on any arrangements made at the very outset.

This letter indicates just about how far this matter has actually gone. I urge, therefore, that on the second reading of the bill the minister answer the questions that so far have not been answered.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I shall draw the attention of the minister to the remarks of the leader of the opposition. I understood that the minister was to make a statement this morning and answer the questions that had been put yesterday. I shall ask him to make that statement on the second reading and give all the information that was asked for in the course of debate.

Mr. Gillis: I judge from the question asked by the hon. member for Cumberland that the correspondence between the department and the province of Nova Scotia is on the secret list. I certainly would like to know what are the views of that province, and I should like to know further what right the premier of that province or anyone else has to designate as secret, correspondence dealing with a matter of national public importance. In the final analysis this is where the decision must remain.