

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

• (2200)

I was interested in the minister's reply. He almost let the cat out of the bag when he said:

—the people of that island province are appreciating and enjoying what has replaced that project, namely, considerable federal assistance under the department of my colleague the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion.

He was referring, of course, to the development plan which many islanders regard as the alternative to the promised causeway. The minister skilfully avoided confirming this view embodied in my supplementary question. Apart from the fact that under the development plan, Prince Edward Island has reached new highs both in unemployment and cost of living, the bartering of one for the other was not a good trade even in the beginning. The development plan requires that the province, the weaker, smaller, poorer partner, shall provide over two-thirds of the cost. That was not, in my view, particularly shrewd bargaining on the part of the province.

But it is not just because the Dominion government is obligated to provide 100 per cent of the cost of a causeway that I recall the potential value which it possesses. Along with many colleagues from Prince Edward Island and elsewhere, I have down through the years set out the advantages in economics and transportation which would flow from the construction of a permanent land link between Prince Edward Island and the mainland. With the rapidly increasing number of tourists to Prince Edward Island there can be little doubt that existing ferry facilities at Borden and Tormentine are destined to become inadequate.

One of the ships on the run, the sturdy icebreaker *Abequest*, is at the quarter century mark. I was surprised to learn that no definite plans are under way for the addition of new ships to the service. I do not wish to see us fall behind in meeting transportation needs on this route. The only adequate answer, of course, is the provision of a permanent link. Modern technology can construct it, the needs of the day require it, and if the government has the requisite foresight it will repudiate its own repudiation and begin to get on with the job of providing it.

Mr. Allen B. Sulatycky (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I have a short answer for the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie). A meeting was held in the first week of May at which a Prince Edward Island-New Brunswick delegation made representations concerning the Northumberland Strait crossing. Senior federal government officials met with the provincial delegates to listen to a proposal which was presented at that time. However, due to a number of points in the proposal which were not clear the delegation was asked to review its position with a view to having a further meeting in the near future.

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

SUPPLY AND SERVICES—TRANSFER FROM REGINA TO WINNIPEG OF AUDIT SERVICES BUREAU—REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, on May 10 I asked the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Richardson) the following question:

In view of the minister's expressed interest in the dispersal of government facilities geographically, would he undertake to review the decision of his department to close the audit services bureau in Regina and transfer it to Winnipeg?

Unfortunately, the minister did not have the opportunity to reply to my question because Mr. Speaker ruled it could not be considered at that time. I am glad to see the minister in his seat and look forward to hearing welcome news affecting Regina when he speaks. As I understand the situation, Mr. Speaker, on June 4 the audit services Bureau of the Department of Supply and Services in Regina is to be closed and the employees are to be transferred to Winnipeg. From then on the services provided through that office are to be provided from the Winnipeg office.

Actually, many of the services now provided by the Regina office will be provided by the employees concerned who will travel from Winnipeg to Regina. They will incur expenses and there will be much dislocation. They will conduct their audit work and then proceed back to Winnipeg. I fail to see how the government can save money from such a move. In addition it is possible, I understand, for some employees now connected with that office who are not in professional categories to encounter certain problems as a result of the dislocation which will take place.

I want to take note of the minister's expressed interest in the dispersal of government facilities throughout Canada. I commend him for his interest and know he has taken a particular interest in seeing that some facilities are moved to Winnipeg.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: Shame!

Mr. Burton: Since the minister comes from Winnipeg, I cannot blame him for his action. I can even understand that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow), both of whom are present, also take an interest in this matter.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: Shame!

Mr. Burton: I know the minister has succeeded in making sure that the expansion of the Canadian Mint will take place in Winnipeg. I commend him for his interest on behalf of his home community in that regard. Yet I ask the minister, is there any need to pick on Regina? Regina is a little smaller than Winnipeg. It is a better city than Winnipeg, although a little smaller. A small number of federal employees are to be found in the city. I think the minister might have some consideration for the needs of Regina and also consider the economics of the situation.