

*Trans-Canada Highway*

held back rather than advanced unless there is a real conference between dominion and provincial representatives not only in regard to the construction of the highway but in regard to the manner in which this and similar undertakings by the provinces are to be financed.

It is all very well to say that the dominion government will help the provinces to do this or that. New undertakings by the provinces in any of these important fields involve financial undertakings which at the present time they are not in a position to assume, unless they know where the additional revenue is to come from. For that very reason there is a related problem which should be considered at the same time, and which indicates the need for a very clear understanding of the financial relationship between the different governments.

Take for instance the case of Newfoundland. An offer to assume 50 per cent of the cost of construction of a highway in Newfoundland at the present time is not going to meet their problem, unless there is a clear understanding as to the type of highway involved, how it is to be built and what it is going to cost, because my own expectation would be that the cost of a highway of the type most people have in mind across Newfoundland at the present time would reach a figure that would impose far too severe a burden on the Newfoundland government if it were called upon to pay 50 per cent of the cost of such a highway.

There is another question which should be carefully examined when approaching this problem. Some provinces have already carried forward extensive highway construction which might be embraced in a trans-Canada highway. Certainly a formula will be necessary to determine how that will be regarded in relation to the construction of the whole highway across the country. Are those provinces which already have built sections of hard-surfaced modern highway along routes which can be regarded as trans-Canada routes to be given credit for that construction?

This would have to be known before an estimate could be made of what the cost to any province would be. Then also there are certain provinces which have a very special problem. Undoubtedly British Columbia with its great mountain ranges has a more severe task in the construction of a trans-Canada highway over its provincial route than would be so in respect of those provinces with less formidable natural barriers.

It will be necessary not only to surface the highway but to do a great deal of blasting

and ballasting, and to erect protective construction so as to make a highway of the type people have in mind, suitable for heavy and fast traffic through the mountains.

Then there is the decision as to whether in the long stretches through northern Ontario and Quebec the highway should follow existing routes, or should follow some route that would have relationship to the strategic aspects of the highway. Certainly the construction of a highway of this kind will be related to our general strategic plans for the use of our raw materials in the event of the necessity arising of using them for defence purposes. All these things enter into the problem of determining the formula by which the route will be decided, as to how the cost will be divided, and the type of highway that will be suitable over any particular stretch of country.

I would emphasize the point that there may well be stretches of highway which would be adequate to carry ordinary traffic in normal times, but which nevertheless may pass through areas where the possible need of a wide and heavily constructed highway for the carriage of heavy freight would of necessity become part of the consideration in the building of such a highway.

For all these reasons I strongly urge that, instead of carrying on negotiations by letter, the governments should be brought together so that around the table they may examine these problems and decide upon a formula which will really work.

We have been discussing other problems associated with western Canada and every one of us knows that one of the real problems to be dealt with in going ahead with the construction of this highway is the manner in which the route through Alberta and British Columbia is to be determined. There are at least three routes that have most vigorous support, and behind the support for each of those routes are strong arguments that have been presented vigorously. I should imagine we all hope that within the lifetime of many or most of us a modern highway will follow each of those routes, but in the meantime, within the means available, a decision must be made as to one route.

The decision as to the route through Alberta and British Columbia will determine the route from Winnipeg through western Canada. If it is to be by one route, it will follow one course shortly after the highway leaves Winnipeg; if it is to be by another route, it will follow another course. Therefore the setting up of some effective mechanism to make a decision in regard to this