

Trans-Canada Highway Act

is going to be for future generations to benefit from and to enjoy. I appreciate the privilege of participating in the discussion of this resolution to amend the Trans-Canada Highway Act in order to extend until May 31, 1964 the period during which contributions by way of payments may be made to the provinces under the act and also to increase the amount that may be expended to \$400 million. I congratulate the Minister of Public Works for sponsoring the resolution because it will enable those provinces which have not availed themselves of federal government participation in the past to make it possible that the national highway will be completed from Newfoundland to British Columbia.

The Canadian Automobile Association made a submission to the federal government advocating the urgent need of a national highway policy for Canada in order to develop the nation's highways efficiently. In its brief it recommends the convening of a conference with the provincial governments and representatives of the municipalities for the purpose of planning and building a national system of roads.

Automobile transportation, because of its convenience, has brought about much of what we like to call our Canadian independent way of life. It has become so popular that automobile manufacturers, through constant research into which untold millions of dollars have been poured, have far outdistanced the efforts of governments to build adequate roads for these vehicles. In 1890 there was not a single mile of pavement in Canada. In 1958 there were 252,000 miles of roads and highways, 41,000 of which were paved.

As everyone knows or should know, the automobile industry and the many economic enterprises that spring from it have actually become a decisive factor in the production of national wealth. The industry has completely transformed rural as well as urban living. May I point out that one out of every seven persons employed in Canada is now directly or indirectly dependent for his livelihood upon the economic activities related to the automotive industry and highway transportation.

In a survey conducted by the Canadian automobile chamber of commerce it is reported that six of every ten automobile owners use their cars to travel to work or use them in the conduct of their business. The same survey found that nearly seven out of every ten cars were operated by families whose chief wage earner earned less than \$3,000 a year. A nation of not quite 18 million people uses for transportation five million vehicles. It can be predicted with

reasonable assurance of accuracy that by 1970 ten million vehicles will travel on the roads and highways of Canada, without taking into consideration the millions of tourists who will visit Canada every year. Therefore, at the present rate of highway construction by all three levels of government, construction will fall far behind the requirements for reasonable and adequate provision to accommodate the ever-increasing number of vehicles competing for space on our highways.

It is true that the responsibility for road building and maintenance is established by the British North America Act, but that was done at a time when there were no automobiles. Those days produced no prophets who foretold the advent of the automobile and the evolution of transportation. Therefore there is a substantially good and sufficient reason why the government should consider an amendment to the act to enable the establishment of a highway program based on national need, which program should be second only to defence.

The present Trans-Canada Highway Act was passed in 1949 and established the framework within which the trans-Canada highway is being constructed. Under the act the federal government has made provision for substantial assistance, and the resolution we are discussing now again provides a sum of money and an extension of the time limit. At the same time, certain inequalities are present. This is what I particularly wish to point out to the minister.

Those provincial governments with few construction problems have completed their construction projects under the earlier agreement. Those provincial governments with longer stretches of highway and more difficult construction problems have not completed their projects. Others have not elected to participate in the federal assistance plan. The result has been that those governments which have completed their portions of the highway according to their agreements with the federal government are now deprived of financial aid. In other words the responsibilities for highways in Canada are not sufficiently co-ordinated nor clearly enough understood to justify the hope that a national system of highways, with a uniform construction will materialize.

As pointed out by the Canadian Automobile Association, the federal government should recognize the necessity of a co-ordinated plan. Canada is one of the few major nations of the world that does not have an integrated transportation policy and a national system of highways. The trans-Canada highway could be the starting point for a national