

Canada-Alaska and Maine Corridors

speedway will have to go around them. It is completely wrong to assert that the distance could be shorter.

This has been demonstrated by a spokesman for my area at the annual meeting of the chambers of commerce of the Atlantic region, in 1967 or 1968, I do not know the precise date. With maps, with diagrams, with chains, it has been possible to demonstrate that if Moncton is taken as the starting point, the distance is 635 miles through Fredericton, on the Trans-Canada Highway, Edmundston, Rivière-du-Loup, Quebec, Montreal. On the other hand, if the starting point is Moncton, through Fredericton, and the proposed Maine corridor, we see that the distance is 633 miles. This is 2 miles less than the present road followed by truck drivers, tourists and anyone you like.

I think that the then Minister of Transport, the Hon. J. W. Pickersgill, tabled in this House the result of a voluminous study on transportation problems in the Atlantic region in 1967. This study commissioned from The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited and volume X referred specifically to a proposed Maine corridor. What was the conclusion of the study? Well, here it is, and I quote:

● (1730)

[*English*]

There are large areas of the Atlantic region's infrastructure in general, and transportation systems in particular, where returns far in excess of those to be expected from a Maine corridor highway can be achieved.

[*Translation*]

There, Mr. Speaker, is knowledgeable conclusion, a serious and intelligent conclusion, that defeats all the arguments of the promoters of a corridor, which is the main aspect of the question we are debating today. And that is what the promoters of the corridor refuse to see. How, indeed, can anyone justify a Canadian corridor in the State of Maine when I know full well that every single hon. member from the Atlantic region, barring none, can rise in this House today and enumerate at least a dozen very important priorities in the field of road construction alone in their respective ridings, Mr. Speaker. And some would tell us to sleep with beautiful corridor projects.

Priorities are altogether different in the Maritime area. Every hon. member from New Brunswick remembers a five year road construction and renovation program, with an estimated \$400 or \$500 million tab, presented last spring to the federal government. It contained only the provincial government's priorities. Such is the problem we should try to solve. Requests must be met within Canada and even within each of the Atlantic provinces. Once we have set up—or patched up, whichever the case is—the infrastructures needed for the day-to-day lives of people in the Atlantic region, then and then only can we consider a corridor highway construction project in Maine.

New Brunswick has so many priorities within its boundaries that it cannot afford the luxury of "flirting" with a corridor project for the time being, nor even for the next 10 or 20 years. It has learned during the last two years that "flirting" with lofty projects such as the Bricklin automobile is costly.

Personally, I would have preferred that the corridor road promoters had shown as much energy, during the last 10 or 15 years urging better development of a Canadian high-

[Mr. Corbin.]

way, at home in New Brunswick as well as in certain Quebec areas traversed by our national highway.

If such had been the attitude of my fellow citizens, if they had thus shown their sincere wish to solve a real problem, and if they were still so inclined, they would concentrate their efforts and energies to the betterment of the Trans-Canada Highway. Then the problem would be solved, and we would not be hearing of a Maine corridor or a highway exchange with the Americans.

What concerns me is not so much being accused of having a parochial approach since I have first been elected here eight years ago. I do not mind that. My constituents may also be accused of parochialism. As a matter of fact, these people want to live, Mr. Speaker. I am deeply disappointed that we cannot find a solution, a typically and really Canadian solution to a Canadian problem.

Where is the sagacity of the Macdonalds, the Lauriers? What happened to resourcefulness in this country? What has happened to the venture spirit of the Maritimers? This is disappointing to me when I read a proposal like this Bill C-272.

I would not be satisfied, I would never be content to hand this matter over to Americans whom I respect, whom I admire, whom I must necessarily call my neighbours since the division of the territory—I was going to say the territory of the Republic of Madawaska—under the Ashburton-Webster treaty of 1842.

And that is exactly where lie the irony and the sordidness of Bill C-272. Today, 134 years ago, a territory that should have remained wholly Canadian was dissected. It was surrendered to the United States of America under the Ashburton Webster treaty. The same region through which it is proposed today to build a corridor, supposedly to connect two parts of the Canadian nation. We do not need a corridor, but the repatriation of the north of the State of Maine. But unfortunately, the history is written down, and for a long time I am afraid. We can only blame the shortsightedness of the colonial administrators of that time who yielded a territory which should have remained Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, let us be realistic, let us be proud of being Canadians, let us be proud of the Trans-Canada Highway on Canadian land, connected now and then in the Atlantic region by ferries, under the confederation agreement.

● (1740)

We did not lack imagination at the time of the design and of the construction of the Trans-Canada Highway. And if it is true that this system cannot meet present demand, let us roll back our sleeves once again and get to work. Let us go on building this nation, let us try to find solutions in our country before bowing to our southern neighbour.

Mr. Speaker, I reject Bill C-272, I cannot support it on behalf of my constituents and on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of other Canadians for whom the Trans-Canada Highway must be upgraded if they are to survive. Our government is now inviting us to show restraint, and the times are particularly difficult for the eastern provinces which have urgent needs in all economic sectors, especially that of infrastructures and means of communications. It seems to me that it is much more important to help the