

*Private Bills*

Mr. Speaker, the object of the present bill is to favour a strictly private company engaged in housing development on an island in the St. Lawrence river. The bridge in Three Rivers will connect both shores of the St. Lawrence, whereas we are being asked today by the Developpement Central Ville de l'Isle Inc. to authorize the construction of a bridge and a causeway to connect one shore of the St. Lawrence to an island known as Ile-aux-Asperges.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, we would have liked very much to know whether this company has complied with the Quebec companies act, first of all, and then, whether it has submitted every year a statement of its operations and is still in existence, because otherwise, we would be providing a company with a dangerous weapon.

In my opinion, in view of the financial situation of the directors of the company, and in view of a new situation which would be created because it would be the first time that extraordinary powers would be granted to a private company, I am convinced that parliament would not act in a businesslike manner.

I am of the opinion that we should "buck" this bill. We should take all necessary steps to support the amendment of the hon. member for Villeneuve, who was very generous a while ago, I am sure, by refraining from simply asking for the six months' hoist. Hence, I shall be glad to support the amendment of the hon. member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette), for the reasons he indicated and also for the reasons which were forwarded to me, urging me to object to the carrying of the bill.

I am quite aware of the fact that the sponsor of this bill in the house is a very active hon. member, but I think he somewhat missed out in failing to get all the necessary information concerning this project. Had he known the true financial position of this company, I am sure he would have never come before the house as sponsor of this bill.

I think we should simply and solely reject this bill, but first we should take a decision on the hon. member for Villeneuve's amendment, which I hope will get the support of the majority of the hon. members.

[Text]

**Mr. Reid Scott (Danforth):** Having listened to the debate so far I wish to voice our support for the amendment moved by the hon. member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette). Indeed, I would urge that the sponsor of the bill dissociate himself from this scheme.

I think the comments made by the various speakers have overwhelming convinced

us—certainly, they have convinced me—that this is a most improper piece of legislation and that we are getting into an area in which parliament should not venture. I am not against free enterprise or private enterprise but this is one area where we should not be giving a private company the right to enter into an undertaking of the sort we now have under consideration. I would appeal to hon. members on the other side who may be thinking of voting in favour of this bill—I can tell by their smiles that some of them obviously are—to consider exactly what principle they may be endorsing if they do so.

The last speaker drew attention to what I consider to be an insurmountable obstacle in the way of the bill. If this company is as weak as it is said to be, what are we going to do if, six months after being given this power it goes bankrupt? What about the people who buy homes on this island? We have no guarantee that they will not be at the mercy of this company. We have no means of knowing the company will not misuse its powers to control public access. It looks to me as though this is nothing but a land speculation scheme and that once the company secures these powers and gets permission to build this bridge there is nothing to stop it selling the whole scheme at a profit, stepping out and renegeing on its obligation to build the bridge, thus making a fool out of parliament.

If a bridge is to be built, surely it should be built by public authorities, either municipal or provincial, and be under public ownership. Let the people who own the land get advantage from better access to it. We all know that once a bridge is built the value of the land will rise. These speculators are the ones who will make the killing, not the people who bought the land originally, lived on it, and probably paid for it. I do not think parliament should concern itself with such a speculative undertaking. I was interested in what the last speaker had to say about the individuals who were undertaking this venture. Their financial solidarity is very questionable. If people of this type are even contemplating a venture of this sort we should have nothing to do with it, because we would be assisting them to get into a situation which would reflect on us and on the municipality. I was also interested to hear that the local municipality itself was opposed to this project. Surely, that should carry some weight with members of this house.

This is not a government measure so we can look at the matter dispassionately and in a non-partisan manner. If the local municipality is opposed to the measure on what appear obviously to be good grounds, how can