

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 22, 1950

The house met at three o'clock.

UNEMPLOYMENT

NEWFOUNDLAND—REFERENCE TO STATEMENT IN
COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY ON MARCH 21

Hon. Humphrey Mitchell (Minister of Labour): On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I should like to correct a statement made yesterday in reply to the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Browne) appearing at page 978 of *Hansard*. I spoke with the hon. member after the sitting concluded. I said that twenty per cent of the people unemployed in Canada reside in the province of Newfoundland. I intended to say that approximately twenty per cent of the employable people of Newfoundland are unemployed. The employable population of Newfoundland is approximately 112,000. The total number of those registered for employment with our national employment service offices at March 2 was 18,600, so the actual percentage is 17. I was using the approximate percentage. I might add that 13,700 of these persons seeking work are either in receipt of unemployment assistance or insurance benefits, or are waiting for their claims to be processed. The total expenditure on this account for the month of March will be almost \$1 million.

STRAIT OF CANSO BRIDGE

PROGRESS TOWARD CONSTRUCTION—CHANGE IN
WIDTH OF ROADWAY

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Minister of Transport): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the strait of Canso bridge.

In March, 1949, the board of engineers which was appointed to review plans for the betterment of transportation facilities across the strait of Canso submitted their final report, in which it was recommended that a low level bridge for both highway and railway traffic should be constructed at an estimated total cost of \$13,503,128. In May of the same year the Department of Transport entered into a contract with P. L. Pratley, consulting engineer of Montreal, Quebec, for the design and supervision of construction of the bridge on a fixed fee basis.

Dr. Pratley immediately established his necessary staff in order to carry out field and office investigations leading to the award of

a contract for the construction of the bridge. A contract was awarded to Foundation Maritime Limited for eight borings on the bridge site in order to establish definite foundation conditions. These borings were completed in the first week of September of last year. Negotiations were carried out by Dr. Pratley with both the province of Nova Scotia and the Canadian National Railways in order to establish the final location of the bridge and other factors.

The report of the board of engineers adopted a clear roadway width of 22 feet between curbs for the highway portion of the bridge. Contract plans and specifications were undertaken by Dr. Pratley on this basis.

The dominion-provincial conference on trans-Canada highways, at their meetings in Ottawa on December 15 and 16 last, adopted a minimum roadway width between curbs of 24 feet for all bridges in excess of 30 feet in length which were to be constructed as part of the highway system. As a result of the adoption of this standard, further negotiations were undertaken with the province in order to determine their wishes in respect of the roadway width of the Canso bridge in the light of the standard as adopted by the conference. Their attention was drawn to the fact that an increase in width from 22 to 24 feet would result in an increase in cost of approximately two per cent of the original total estimate and would also delay the calling for tenders for the work by three or four months due to the necessity of a complete redesign of the steel superstructure and foundations.

Under date of February 24, 1950, I received a letter from the Hon. Angus L. Macdonald, premier of Nova Scotia, in which he informed me that, while he agreed that the insistence of 24 feet would delay the undertaking, he considered that the bridge should be designed for a roadway width of 24 feet between curbs to allow for a reasonable safety factor in highway travel on the structure. On receipt of this letter, Dr. Pratley was informed by my office to immediately change his plans and specifications to conform to this standard.

Previous to this change, it was anticipated that final plans and specifications would have been ready to call for tenders on construction in March of this year with actual construction beginning by August or September. As matters now stand, it will not be possible to call