

*Trans-Canada Highway*

be assurance of these practical steps being taken which will really result in the construction of a trans-Canada highway.

In view of the fact that the correspondence has been tabled only this afternoon it is obvious that no hon. member is in a position to express the views that have been set out by the provincial governments in the correspondence. I will not attempt to guess what views have been expressed. Nor have we been informed yet as to which provinces have not expressed approval of the general plans or what objections have been raised. But I should like to review the general situation and what is essential to make the bill effective no matter what provisions it contains.

There is not a single member in this house who by now can fail to have been impressed with the fact that the people of Canada generally are in favour of having a trans-Canada highway which will make it possible for Canadians, or those visiting Canada, to travel by modern standards of comfort from one side of this country to the other. This is something more than mere comfort. Today the various types of vehicles that are available for highway transport are making possible a highly important means of distributing supplies, and are making it more satisfactory for the farmers and other producers to get their products to the markets.

To avail ourselves, however, of the advantages that are made available in this way it is essential that we have highways with surfaces that are suited to that type of vehicle. When the minister speaks of 60 per cent of the trans-Canada highway being paved, I think that a definition of the word "paved" will enter into a discussion of that kind, because I am inclined to think that by what is at present regarded as a modern standard of pavement on any route that could be regarded as a trans-Canada route 20 per cent would be a very high estimate indeed. In fact for a very considerable part of the route I do not know how the minister is able to determine what percentage has been paved because from Winnipeg to Vancouver I had thought there was still a very considerable amount of doubt as to which route was going to be followed. Consequently no estimate within that area could be effective without some determination of which route was to be followed so that such paving as had been done might be regarded as part of this plan or otherwise.

Nor is it only between Winnipeg and Vancouver that there is any doubt as to the route of the highway. There is very considerable doubt about a longer stretch of the highway through Ontario, and I understand also in the province of Quebec and in

the maritime provinces as well. Most of the highway construction in Newfoundland will be new construction entirely except that part of the highway that runs northwest from St. John's. All this brings us to the fact that enabling legislation is something put on the statute books which has very little effect until the preliminary steps have been taken to find the key which will unlock this very real problem that is surrounded by so many difficulties.

With the agreement that there should be a highway, there is also very real disagreement in certain parts of the country as to where that highway should go. I know we are not going to settle it here. The one thing we should not attempt to do would be to settle it here, because any disposition to reach decisions in advance would be the very thing which would commit a number of people in the different provinces who hold very strong and sincere views to adhere to those views in advance of a decision being reached.

I think we must recognize first of all that the construction of highways has been under provincial authorities ever since this type of construction has been undertaken. Certain special work has been done from time to time by agencies of the dominion government; but on the whole this work is something that has been entirely under provincial governments. They have their departments of highways skilled in this work, with very considerable experience, and they are in a position to undertake whatever task of this kind may be imposed upon them.

The minister has said he does not think this should be a superhighway. That again is one of those things that must be decided as a matter of over-all policy before any decision made in the house can be effected. It may be that different standards of highway construction will be best suited to different parts of Canada. But that should be part of a generally settled over-all plan embracing the whole of the country, and acceptable to those provincial governments which will be carrying out the work.

Then again there should be a clearly defined procedure as to how the route will be chosen, and that is going to be one of the difficult problems to be faced. It is a problem which will call for the highest degree of co-operation and of recognition of the local views held in regard to the matter. I said the other day, and I repeat, that the minister charged with the responsibility of this legislation has indicated a very real desire to meet the provincial governments in matters of this kind. But may I say, from some experience on the other side of this general problem, that the construction of this great highway will be