

Trans-Canada Highway Act

that the federal government is prepared to enter into financial arrangements with respect to the building of other highways along the lines that I have suggested.

If the minister takes the opportunity to speak again I hope he will give us a fairly complete understanding of his acceptance of the things I have suggested so that we in British Columbia may realize that it is not the Hon. Mr. Gaglardi who builds all our roads but that the Minister of Public Works also has some say in the highways in British Columbia and also pays something toward their cost.

Mr. Granger: Mr. Chairman, for my part the Minister of Public Works could not ask for money for a more worthy purpose than the trans-Canada highway, provided of course that I can make some suggestions regarding its disposition. Speaking generally, I would say that nothing is really more important to the Canada of today than transportation and perhaps nothing is more important to the Canada of the future than the plans we make today for future policy regarding transportation. Teachers, doctors, clergymen, and all the others who are serving mankind need roads in order to service their charges. I do not mean to say that road building is more important than education or health for instance but I do say that the success of almost any program for human betterment is gauged by the adequacy of available transportation. And no means of transportation is so valuable or so important as roads. No means of transportation is so personal. Roads not only tie the nation together but they tie families together.

The modern highway has speeded civilization in a way that no other means in history has. The trans-Canada highway is an expression of Canada's belief in national transportation. Originally the plan was for the federal government to share in 50 per cent of the cost, and later it was agreed that 90 per cent of 10 per cent would be paid by the federal government for what is termed gap building.

I want to speak particularly of the needs of the trans-Canada highway in Newfoundland, and in order to do that, to place Newfoundland in its proper perspective I would ask for the indulgence of the committee while I recite a little bit of the history of road building in Newfoundland and where Newfoundland fits in today in this present scheme. I would begin by comparing the roads in Newfoundland with those in the Atlantic provinces. Nova Scotia has approximately 15,000 miles of motorable roads; New Brunswick, 13,000; and Prince Edward Island,

[Mr. Howard.]

3,200. Newfoundland, which is much larger than Prince Edward Island, has 3,500 miles.

The reason why Newfoundland lags so far behind the maritimes is largely owing to its history, partly to economics and partly to the fact that Newfoundland was settled by people who were interested only in the fisheries. They settled in hundreds of settlements around the 6,000 miles of Newfoundland's coast line. The sea was not only their farmland, the place from which they got their harvest, but the sea was their highway. They built their houses as close to it as possible and seldom did they turn their eyes away from the sea to look inland. For generations it remained the same and very little road building was done. Actually, I believe the first road was built in Newfoundland in 1832, and it was built from St. John's to Portugal Cove, followed shortly afterwards by a road to Harbour Grace and later from Holyrood to Placentia. Gradually the Avalon peninsula began to get a system of roads. That was about all, with the exception of perhaps roads such as existed between Bonavista and Catalina, which connected a large and important fishing area with a seaport. But apart from those roads of an entirely local character there was no road building in Newfoundland until the 1920's, and then people began to get road conscious. The sea was no longer fast enough or dependable enough. The motor car was arriving and an effort was made to link up settlements, sometimes by short-cuts between coves, but generally speaking a road program developed during that decade. This was brought to a halt by the economic collapse around the end of the 1920's, or certainly by the early 1930's. The commission government did build some good highways but they did not catch up with the progress which had been made in the maritime provinces.

Our biggest road building program has taken place since confederation and from 1949 to 1957 Newfoundland constructed 1,100 miles of new roads and rebuilt 500 miles of old roads. But increasingly heavy traffic tore apart the gravel roads faster than they could be built and just last year the new minister of highways, the Hon. Gregory I. Power, instituted the team system of mechanized maintenance and that has proved to be very successful. Actually, 3,100 miles of road were reconditioned and 300 miles were rebuilt. All this has meant the spending of millions of dollars on equipment, personnel and so forth. Seventy miles of road were paved last year with a much larger paving program set down for this year.

If you look at the map of Newfoundland you will notice that the island has many long peninsulas and deep bays. The coast line is