

Trans-Canada Highway

with changing conditions in Canada. The Parliamentary Secretary knows very well that for the last two or three years the federal government has adamantly refused to participate, even on a fifty-fifty basis, in the modernization of sections of the highway which require modification to keep abreast of the standards required for present day needs.

I think this is the great inadequacy of the Trans-Canada Highway Act. It is not good enough for the federal government to make a one-shot contribution and then completely withdraw. This is not the case in areas where the highway is incomplete at the present time. The date has been moved forward and the federal government has increased participation to the extent of as much as 90 per cent of the cost of the most expensive sections. Yet those provinces with the initiative to build the highway quickly and which tried to meet the original completion date are penalized to the extent that, first of all, they get only 50 per cent of the cost and, second, they pay 100 per cent of the cost of future modernization, there being no federal contribution whatever. I think this is a violation perhaps not of the Trans-Canada Highway Act but certainly of the concept that there should be at least one modern high-speed highway from one coast to the other.

Whenever a province pleads with the federal government that what was good enough in the early fifties is not good enough now, that province is not listened to. They receive no consideration regarding maintenance of the highway, although that is understood, but they are even refused consideration of federal government participation in modifications to bring the highway up to the requirements of today. Surely the Parliamentary Secretary will realize that there are certain sections of Canada today which now require modern four lane highways if the safety factor necessary when taking into account traffic flow is going to be maintained.

Therefore I cannot honestly support the idea that there should be provision along these highways for pedestrian paths, because I do not think this is what the trans-Canada highway should have. However, I certainly think that the federal government has a responsibility to continue to participate in keeping this national arterial highway up to date.

The Parliamentary Secretary advanced the argument that there is some kind of constitutional problem over the federal government setting down specifications for this highway.

Well, Mr. Speaker, whether or not two wrongs make a right I do not know but there is certainly a precedent here. The financial contribution of the federal government was contingent upon certain specifications being met. Therefore that precedent completely destroys the argument that there is a constitutional problem about the federal government suggesting in this case that certain specifications should be met.

Mr. Stewart: May I ask the hon. gentleman a question? Does the hon. gentleman realize that in this instance, unlike the situation that prevailed between 1945 and 1949, no municipality or incorporated town or city and no province on its own behalf has come forward asking for pedestrian paths? That was not true with regard to the original construction of the highway.

Mr. Olson: If the Parliamentary Secretary says that is true and that they did not ask for pedestrian paths, then I accept it. But I suggest that that does not aid his argument that there is a constitutional question. If it was originally proper for the financial contribution of the federal government to be contingent upon specifications regarding the width of the road, the compaction and all the other things that go into the building of a road, then it must certainly be equally constitutionally proper, if that is the right word, for the federal government to include other specifications now if they so wish. Therefore I do not think it is a sound argument to say that the federal government would be violating some constitutional provision by including pedestrian paths or anything else in the specifications for the highway.

I know there are other members who want to speak but in closing may I say that I do not believe that the federal government is discharging its responsibility to fulfil the intention that there be at least one transcontinental arterial highway across Canada when it makes a one-shot payment and then withdraws from participating in any of the modifications and modernization which may be required to keep the highway up to the standards required in 1966.

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Queens): Mr. Speaker, I should like to congratulate the hon. member for the very important initiative he has taken. The question of safety on our highways is one of compelling national urgency. I believe it is one too in which the dominion, as my hon. and learned friend mentioned has been the case before, must