

Trans-Canada Highway

outlining the federal government's proposal. I wish that paragraph had not appeared. The paragraph reads as follows:

The federal government's contribution is being made by reason of the national aspect of the project and its participation is, of necessity, contingent upon all provinces entering into agreements with the federal government.

Is the minister going to place in the hands of each province of Canada the right to veto the construction of the trans-Canada highway?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must inform the hon. member that his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Continue.

Mr. Argue: I have one more question and I shall sit down. I should like to ask the minister whether he is going to place in the hands of Premier Duplessis of Quebec for example the power to veto the construction of the trans-Canada highway. Some provinces may not find it possible to raise their 50 per cent of the construction cost. It may be too great a burden for their provincial treasuries. If some provinces cannot afford to build the road, is the minister going to hold up the federal government's contribution toward the building of the highway within those provinces that wish to undertake its construction?

In conclusion I urge the minister, when he brings in the bill, if he can get his colleagues in the cabinet to agree, to increase the federal contribution much above 50 per cent; and, if not at this session at a later session, bring in a program whereby federal contributions will be made to the provinces in order that feeder roads can be built, so that all Canadians irrespective of the province in which they reside, and irrespective of the region in which they reside, will be within reasonable proximity to a decent highway.

Mr. Solon E. Low (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, it is in many ways, I think, a tragedy that Canada has not yet provided for her people at least one trans-Canada or trans-continental highway. I submit that our failure in this respect casts a serious reflection on our vision. I believe it also reflects on our enterprise and on our leadership, but most of all on our interest in the development of our own country.

The resolution that is now under consideration is, I submit, twenty-five or thirty years too late. In this respect the trans-Canada highway is in much the same position as Canada's utilization of international waters for irrigation purposes. We have neglected to take aggressive action in this regard to secure to future generations in Canada their rightful proportion of those waters by putting it to use, until we are now in a difficult posi-

[Mr. Argue.]

tion with respect thereto. I say, sir, that we are also in a parallel position with regard to a national policy for making Canada as nearly self-sufficient as she can be in the essentials of living, and as a result we are lagging along utterly dependent upon other countries for a good many of the things that we ought to be producing for ourselves.

This is a dangerous position to be in at a time like this. The chief cause of all of these conditions is lack of vision, lack of leadership. I do not need to remind hon. members that where there is no vision the people perish. The Liberal party must bear the major responsibility for the fact that Canada has no trans-Canada highway, for that party has been in power for 47 of the 82 years since confederation, and 36 out of the 49 years since the turn of the present century. I do not wish to heap the blame upon the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply (Mr. Winters) because he merely inherited the situation. He is young in the important position he holds, and I congratulate him upon taking the lead in this very important matter so soon after assuming his high office.

However the government cannot escape some responsibility for its failure in the past even though the minister himself does not have to accept full responsibility now. The resolution before us calls for the introduction of a bill which, so far as we can learn, is to contain provisions for agreement between the dominion and the provinces to share the cost of building a trans-Canada highway; in retaining the technical staff to advise the provincial governments, and for inspection and accounting duties.

I see, however, nothing in the resolution to indicate the method to be used in determining the route the highway is to follow through the various areas of this vast country of ours. The resolution is also silent as to the way in which costs are to be shared between the dominion and the provinces. The minister did say in his opening statement that the federal government proposes to pay 50 per cent of the cost. To us that is a great disappointment. It was also most disappointing to hear the minister say that the highway he proposes will have "some national complexion". A timid whisper like that is exactly the opposite of what one would expect from a government with a majority the size of this one. I say it is very difficult for anyone to understand why the government will walk roughshod over the law and standing orders, but will plunge headlong almost with the reckless abandon of the Stampeders football line when it comes to abolishing appeals to the privy council and making amendments to the constitution, and