

Trans-Canada Highway Act

Unless the Prime Minister talks in his sleep we cannot imagine with whom these discussions took place. The hon. gentleman was asked about it on March 8, 1960 by the hon. member for Assiniboia, as reported at page 1839 of *Hansard*. After making reference to the telecast in question the following exchange occurred between the hon. member for Assiniboia and the Prime Minister:

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): Can the Prime Minister say what is the nature of the preliminary discussions, and what progress is being made?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the discussions are preliminary; that is their nature, and when we are in the position to go farther than that the house will be made aware of the plans we have in mind.

Mr. Argue: Can the Prime Minister say with what province or provinces he has had those preliminary discussions?

Mr. Diefenbaker: The question of another trans-Canada highway has not been discussed with the provinces particularly.

To whom was the Prime Minister speaking? Did someone write him a letter saying, "Dear John, I think it is about time to make a start on this", or what? Who or what is the other factor that is going to participate, if not the provinces? The four western provinces are affected and have, through the trans-Canada highway association, drawn up a route for the second highway.

The provinces will be the ones who will be determining the route and financing part of it. The Prime Minister says that it has not been discussed with the provinces particularly. I submit this is just wishful comment on the part of the Prime Minister; it is a distortion of something which may be a fact. He may have had discussions with the Minister of Public Works. Before the Minister of Public Works insists upon passage of this resolution—if those discussions have been held—he owes it to the committee to rise in his place and tell us with whom there have been discussions. If he has had discussions with the Prime Minister, he is in duty bound to discharge his ministerial responsibility by telling us about those discussions, and what plans, if any, are being made for the building of a second trans-Canada highway.

If those discussions have not been held—and according to the Prime Minister's comment they have not been held with the provinces—then the Prime Minister should be ashamed of himself because he has misled a great number of people into believing that amendments were to be made during this session to permit the provinces to participate in the building of another trans-Canada highway.

I have letters on file from municipal bodies in the riding of Skeena in northern British

Columbia, and I assume the Minister of Public Works has, too, in which they say, following the Prime Minister's telecast, "We understand a second route is going to be proceeded with; can you tell us what it is all about?" There is not any indication in the resolution that there is any second trans-Canada highway route being developed, although it may well be that this is in the minister's mind. I should like to hear from him. Perhaps this may be a good opportunity for the minister to take advantage of the committee stage and tell us what he has in mind.

I think the Prime Minister is only laying the ground work for the next election. He is raising hope now; he will develop it next year and whenever the election is called he will say that discussions have gone on for a number of years and he is almost ready for it.

I submit that so far as western Canada is concerned, a start on a second trans-Canada highway is a must, and a must right now, not two or three years from now, but an indication should be given to the provinces. It should have been given to them already. Perhaps an indication will be given at the conference which will be held later on; but an indication should be given to the provinces that the federal government is willing to participate with them in the building of a second or northerly route.

In northern British Columbia we have quite an interest in a second route and quite an interest in highways of any sort because there are so few of them and what there are, are in bad shape. Of course, this is not the responsibility of the Minister of Public Works. Highways at the moment are a provincial matter. I only wish to relate the need for a second trans-Canada highway and to suggest in general terms the route which that second trans-Canada highway should follow through northern British Columbia.

I think the principle that is established now with the present trans-Canada highway, namely that part of Vancouver island is included in the route, should be applied to the north and to Queen Charlotte islands. The Queen Charlotte islands should be included in the route. The route should run from Prince Rupert and take in Prince George and thence to Jasper.

The Chairman: I have been following the hon. member. I do not wish to be too strict in my ruling but I do not think this resolution has to do with the construction of a second trans-Canada highway. This resolution, which precedes an amendment to the Trans-Canada Highway Act, has to do only with construction of the present highway. To try to relate it to the construction of another