

The Budget—Mr. Hopkins

resolution to the Minister of Highways of Ontario requesting the early completion of the proposed highway 417. The hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. McBride) and myself were asked to support this brief, and we did so.

In reply to my letter to the Minister of Highways, the Hon. George E. Gomme, I was informed that roads were not the only problems in eastern Ontario, and that if we had really wanted to admit it, another problem was lack of economic development policies. He suggested that if the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton and myself had succeeded in getting the area designated, this would have gone a long way toward solving our problems. In other words, the minister was trying to pass the buck to us. Let me tell the Hon. George Gomme that the hon. members for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton and Renfrew North have now done their homework and we are looking for him to do his.

I delivered that speech shortly after the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton and I had succeeded, through speeches in this House, and through talking to party officials, in convincing our ministers in this House of Commons that the Ottawa River valley is very important, very much like parts of the Maritimes. It is also very closely related to the Maritimes. A number of us who have relatives in these areas travel back and forth. We were able to convince the ministers concerned that this area required economic policies. The Minister of Regional Economic Expansion saw fit to declare our area a special area under regional economic expansion. We have reaped some benefits from that program.

Let me tell you, however, what has happened since then with regard to Mr. Gomme's statement to me that another problem must be met which was related to economic development. I stated we had done our homework on this subject. Mr. Gomme, as Minister of Highways and his successor, the new Minister of Transportation and Communications, as late as January 28, 1972 advised the then Minister of National Defence that no second bridge was required across the Petawawa River because a start was to be made on highway 417. Shortly after that, an announcement was made that construction would start in 1973. Originally, the starting date was 1975. I can only say that in 1869 the Canadian government bought the Hudson's Bay Company land in western Canada in order to build a railway across this nation. Without the technological knowledge we have in this modern age, the Canadian engineers of that day built the Canadian Pacific Railway across this nation and had it completed by 1885. We have such a progressive Department of Highways, Transportation and Communications in Ontario today that it takes several years to build a very important bridge across the Petawawa River.

• (1710)

At midnight of May 6, the present bridge collapsed, the very bridge about which I spoke in this House two years ago. At that time, I wrote a letter of complaint to the highways minister of the province of Ontario and received an arrogant answer from him. When the bridge collapsed, several families were stranded on the north side, the site of the Canadian forces base, Petawawa. In order to get the military personnel to assist the civilian authorities, the request must come from the province concerned. I made six or seven telephone calls to Queens Park, Toronto, to try to locate a provincial minister, but I could not even get an answer from the switchboard at Queens Park, Toronto. I even made a phone call to

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Ottawa to try to locate a provincial minister. Is this the kind of progressive government that this great new Colgate premier of the province of Ontario is giving us today?

On Sunday, May 7 I sent a telex to the premier of Ontario requesting that a state of crisis be declared and that emergency measures be taken to assist in dealing with this problem because about 4,000 employees cross the bridge daily to and from work. My telex was backed by one from the warden of Renfrew County who is head of some 40 reeves across the county. It was also backed by a telex from the mayor of the city of Pembroke, one from the mayor of the town of Deep River and one from the reeves of Petawawa township and the village of Petawawa in which the military base is located. As of today, May 23, the premier of the province has not even had the courtesy to acknowledge a single one of those telexes from the elected officials in the area. I do not care what the premier of the province thinks of me as a person, but I respect his office and I expect him to respect what I represent, even if he cannot respect me personally. I also expect him to respect the office of the warden of Renfrew County, of the mayor of the city of Pembroke and the mayor of the town of Deep River. That is the least we can expect.

The old ball game has started once again. People have started asking, for what are we paying the Canadian armed forces? The bridge collapsed 450 feet away from the gateway to the second largest military base in Canada. First of all, let me point out that this bridge is part of a provincial highway and it is not the responsibility of the Department of National Defence in any way. They cannot take action until they are requested to do so by the province of Ontario which must take full legal responsibility for any action taken after the collapse of the bridge. The armed forces did not receive a request from the province of Ontario until the Friday following the collapse. Finally, the engineers checked the site toward the end of the week. The approaches to the river banks were built by the province, the abutments were put in by the province and the province took full legal responsibility for that action. I want to pay a compliment to the Canadian armed forces because General Quinn, commanding officer at base Petawawa, his staff and his military personnel have co-operated fully, and had it not been for them I do not know what we would have done. They followed the correct procedures.

Yesterday, 150 engineers from the Royal Canadian armed forces were on duty all day constructing a Bailey bridge. They started at eight this morning and at four p.m. they had 70 feet of the 260 foot span built. This shows the expertise of our armed forces, and it shows what they can do when they are asked to do it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hopkins: I do not want to hear it said that our armed forces today are not a professional group.

In the time that I have left, I should like to make a few remarks about an interprovincial national park that will make a great contribution towards achieving greater unity in this nation. We in the northern part of my constituency, in the area to the north of the Mattawa River and