

Government Orders

the poor relations of Confederation. We do not like to be called the have not provinces.

• (1240)

This fixed link will create an economic boom and an advantage to business and tourism. I am in favour and I say three cheers for those who decided to go ahead with the fixed link.

Ms. Roseanne Skoke (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague, the hon. member from Nova Scotia.

As the member for Central Nova, the issue of the fixed link is one of major concern in my riding. It is recognized that the Northumberland bridge, the fixed link to Prince Edward Island, is a link to economic opportunity and progress for Prince Edward Island and all of Atlantic Canada. This link will create job opportunities for Atlantic Canadians throughout construction of the bridge and maintenance thereafter. It will create opportunity for tourism and economic progress.

However in my riding of Central Nova some concerns have been expressed regarding competition between the fixed link at one end of the island and the ferry service at the other end. The employees of the ferry service rely upon this means for commercial and domestic transport and for carrying tourists from Caribou to Wood Islands. The shipbuilding industry and Steelworkers of America Union rely upon the building of new ferries and the maintenance of those existing for their livelihood.

I wish to reassure the people of Central Nova that the competing interests between one end of the island and the other and competing interests between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia along with the competing interests of construction workers, ferry workers and shipbuilders can be very readily reconciled.

The fixed link will create employment opportunity as well as tourism opportunity for all of us in Atlantic Canada. It will in no way diminish the importance of the ferry service running between Wood Islands and Caribou. The continuation and upgrading of the ferry service between Caribou and Wood Islands will create opportunities for tourism and economic progress in Central Nova and for the province of Nova Scotia.

Therefore on behalf of the people of Central Nova I support the motion put forward this morning by the hon. minister of public works. I thank my learned colleague for her comments.

Ms. Clancy: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member from that great riding of Central Nova which for the first time in many years boasts a member from the Liberal Party. I congratulate her on her election and on her comments this morning.

In talking about the benefits of the fixed link to tourism I was remiss in not particularly mentioning the Caribou-Wood Islands service. It is essentially a summertime service and is also a great boon to tourism. The ferries on that line are built in the shipyard in Pictou county and all of us want nothing more than to see this line continue. It too is a wonderful way to travel between Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia to get the benefits of two of the most beautiful places on earth, that is Prince Edward Island and Pictou county.

I know when the hon. member speaks with her passionate devotion to the people of her area they can be assured of the safety of that line and the continued interest in both the use of that line for tourism and business. The two access points to Prince Edward Island, to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia can work very well together in harmony and to the benefit of all Canadians.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, in May 1873 the government of Sir John A. Macdonald passed an act admitting Prince Edward Island to Confederation. A month later his cabinet approved an order in council which also promised the "efficient steam service for the conveyance of mails and passengers to be established and maintained thus placing the island in continuous communication with the intercolonial railway and the railway system of the Dominion".

The provision of that order in council has now become part of our present day Constitution. The promise has been kept for 121 years. Today it is the intention of both the federal government and that of Prince Edward Island to change the wording of the clause but not the promise itself, thus committing the federal government to a fixed link instead of a ferry service.

• (1245)

At the outset I want the House to note the intention of our forefathers. Their intent was obvious. They were clearly intending to obligate the federal government to keep the island in continuous communication with the mainland. The mode of transportation by ferry was also specified and the federal government wishes to confirm that same intention. However, today it wants to specify a different mode of transportation.

The Reform Party of Canada does not wish to argue that a bridge would not be beneficial to Prince Edward Island. Common assent to the plan has been given by provincial plebiscite and resolution.

The fixed link has weathered protests by environmentalists and engineers who argue that the bridge will be unhealthy or unsafe. It has endured bad press, public dispute and court challenges and now all that remains is to change this clause. No one argues that the bridge will mean more prosperity for the maritimes and increased economic development for Prince Edward Island in particular.