

after all they are here to defend their regional and provincial interests. But I was really startled, I reacted at first timidly, I should admit; I was very surprised by what the hon. member for Laprairie said in 1973 when he proposed as a solution to the problem of the Alaska-Yukon Highway a strange compromise, a strange exchange with the United States. For the information of my colleagues, I shall quote from the original speech of the hon. member for Laprairie; on March 9, 1973, as recorded in *Hansard*, he said:

[English]

● (1640)

My proposition, which I consider sound and has a good chance of success if we can convince a few more people,—

Perhaps the hon. member was referring to people like me at that time.

—involves encouraging the U.S. government to construct a four-lane, high speed highway across the top of the state of Maine, linking the eastern townships—

That is in the province of Quebec.

—auto route with a point in New Brunswick, possibly involving some part of U.S. Interstate 95,—

These are the key words:

—in return for the Canadian federal government spending an equal amount of money on upgrading and paving the Alaska Highway. The arguments in favour of this proposition are obvious. It would promote Canadian unity; it would bring Canadians closer together by reducing travelling time between central Canada and the maritimes by a minimum of five hours. I am not talking from the eastern Canadian point of view.

The hon. member for Laprairie continued:

In addition, it would reduce transportation costs between central Canada and the maritime provinces. It would make possible a large increase in tourist traffic between the maritime provinces—

It goes on and on. The hon. member for Laprairie advanced a number of arguments that, in my opinion, are more fancy than fact. I thought I would discuss that intervention here at this time.

[Translation]

And hon. members will forgive me if I consider quite unacceptable the trade-off proposition put forward by the hon. member for Laprairie (Mr. Watson) during the discussion of the question of the Yukon-Alaska Highway at that time. There was trading-off, Madam Speaker, since the hon. member for Laprairie wanted eastern Canadians to sacrifice their national interests for the benefit of the so-called national interest of western Canadians. As I said a moment ago in my remarks, there is no question of us in the east sacrificing anything whatever for the moment, for on all accounts our region is underprivileged compared with the west. And I consider quite meaningless the proposition put forward in 1973 by the hon. member for Laprairie.

I consider that such a trade-off as the hon. member for Laprairie advocated in 1973 would require, as I said a moment ago, that we make immense sacrifices. Perhaps it would be fitting to say what would those sacrifices be.

I would mean that for all practical purposes we would abandon the idea of a national highway linking the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast, in exchange for what? In exchange for a highway which would cross a neighbouring state and divert all commercial, tourist and whatever

Alaska Highway

traffic which now uses the Trans-Canada Highway at Fredericton, through Edmundston, which crosses the Quebec border at Rivière-du-Loup, goes through Quebec City and along the St. Lawrence River to Montreal, divert all that traffic towards an American highway. It would be an exchange to thank the Americans, to pay for the construction of a highway in certain areas of British Columbia, Alaska and Yukon, and who would be the losers and the winners in all that?

Well, I can tell you who will be the losers, and I am talking on behalf of my constituency, of at least half of the province, and even the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Jones) who is absent today. I know that he shares my concern in that regard because he already stated his position publicly on that subject. We would be taking money from our pockets to give it to the people of British Columbia. As I said a moment ago, I have nothing against British Columbia, and it seems to me the problem we have been advised of is serious and deserves to be solved. However it should not be solved on the back of another part of the country, the east, the area which I represent here in the House of Commons.

That is what I had to say today, Madam Speaker. I wish the hon. member and his bill good luck. I hope, as he and some of his colleagues do, that we will have the opportunity of studying the bill in committee. I should be willing to sit on that committee and have a chance to dissect it, look into its intrinsic value and, if possible, work with the hon. member towards finding solutions, monetary, administrative or otherwise. I trust that, in return, at a later date, he can give me a hand in the solution of the serious highway problems we have in eastern Canada.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Is the hon. member for Laprairie (Mr. Watson) rising on a point of order?

Mr. Watson: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of clarification because my bill which I have had on the order paper was referred to just now. Remarks which I made on an earlier bill were referred to by the previous speaker, who is a very capable representative of northern New Brunswick. I would suggest, however, that some of the views he has expressed in defence of his own area are slightly parochial, even though they may be well founded from his local constituents' point of view.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Order, please. That is debate, not a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Corbin: Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

Madam Speaker, I feel the hon. member for Laprairie has enough experience in the House not to take advantage of a so-called point of order to attack me personally as he has just done.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Order, please. I am afraid that this is far from a question of privilege.

Mr. Cliff McIsaac (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, I do not like to pursue the line of argument we have just heard from my two hon. friends from eastern Canada.