

Government Orders

project. It wants to put on the best face possible, even though it knows it is not quite right.

As a result we have this *mélange* and nobody is quite sure what the right answers are. They are not even sure of answers, let alone the right answers.

What we have tried to do is delete this thing. To finish, I want to say that the opponents have said if the government regulations are followed and the appropriate environmental review process does take place and the result is positive they will accept the decision. It is never too late.

I think the only problem we are dealing with now is the private developer saying if approval is not given, if we do not move on this very soon the whole deal is going to fall through. If the deal is as good as the proponent says it is for the people of Canada then let us do it, but let us do it right.

• (1045)

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague from the New Democratic Party. In reading over the amendments the New Democrats have put forward it looks as if they want to totally stop this project.

For a few moments this morning I want to talk about a subject that is very close to the heart of Prince Edward Islanders and every Canadian, and that is transportation.

It has been said that the railways were a steel ribbon which held Canada together. While they have been allowed to wither and die in most parts of the country, other transportation problems and solutions have found their way to the forefront.

My own province, about which we speak today, came into Confederation on the promise of speedy and efficient communication with the rest of Canada. Believe me, there have been many times when Islanders, along with many other Atlantic Canadians, have thought long and hard about those commitments and how the federal government has chosen to fulfil them. We have fought long and hard, especially when we see transportation policies developed that seem to hurt our region while at the same time other facilities in other parts of the country are improved.

If I might be permitted, I would like to give hon. members a short history lesson about the transportation

between Prince Edward Island and the mainland. In the early years after Confederation winter traffic and mail were transported by ice-boats, small open row-boats which were pushed, rowed and dragged across open water and ridges of ice and slush. Many tales of heroism and tragedy are told about the days of the ice-boats, but pressure from the government and people of Prince Edward Island led federal authorities to act gradually over a period of years to replace these ice-boats with a variety of ice-breaking ships.

This led through time to the massive ice-breakers that we have today which provide good service across the strait to the best of their ability. Even though the current Marine Atlantic fleet combines the best of modern technology there are many times in winter months when crossings are delayed at some length.

The first discussion of a fixed crossing began over 100 years ago with a proposal for the construction of a tunnel that would allow trains to move freely between Prince Edward Island and the rest of Canada. The discussion and debate on the tunnel project lasted for about 20 years. It gradually died out as the growth in usage of the automobile and the improvements in the capacities of the ferries signalled that a change was coming in transportation.

Even though each new improvement in the ferry service was hailed as the final solution it was soon found that better and more efficient service was needed and the call for improvements was renewed. The idea of a fixed crossing seemingly disappeared for 50 years, until the mid-1950s at which time plans were drawn for a causeway and then a bridge-causeway-tunnel combination. These plans were shelved in 1969. The idea lay dormant until the mid-1980s when the present round of fixed link discussions began.

Again there was an evolutionary process. The first proposal was for a tunnel that would transport automobiles and electrically operated trains. Eventually 12 different proposals came forward and were considered by the Department of Public Works.

The provision of a speedy and efficient transportation system has been at the forefront and will continue to be a dominant theme in the life of our province, as it has been in the life of our country. It is one that I hope we can resolve as concerned Canadians over the next few years.