

the highway portion of the bridge, and to have the exclusive right to levy and collect tolls and charges for the use of the bridge if it desires to do so.

Mr. MONK. As I understand, the provincial government is not limited in its right to collect tolls, but can collect any amount it sees fit. In the vicinity of Montreal the amount of the tolls, at any rate, is limited. But I call my hon. friend's attention to this—and I do it very disinterestedly on the part of the people who will use that bridge—that in connection with this bridge an abuse is being created which we have been trying to abolish in the neighbourhood of Montreal for over thirty years, and which was established there shortly after the conquest. We have had there the creation of a trust, and tolls have been exacted mercilessly from the people and have gone in great part to pay the expenses of the trustees and of the administration generally. My hon. friend will notice that the provincial government is merely obliged to pay a certain fixed amount every year and to keep the wooden part of this bridge in repair. The bridge is certainly a work of general advantage to the people of Prince Edward Island. It has cost a great deal, and we have not finished paying for it yet. We have built it entirely at our own expense. It is therefore to be considered as a work for the general advantage of the Dominion. The obligation of the local government to keep the roadway planked and the wooden part of the bridge painted is very slight. I venture to say, from the experience that I have had, that that obligation in future will be largely lessened by the large amount of work which the federal government will have to perform upon that bridge. In the interest of the people of the island—and I am sure my hon. friend will support me in that—it will be a very great advantage to have that right of collecting tolls abolished and free circulation given to the people.

Mr. HACKETT. What is being done in connection with the Hillsboro bridge? Is the work going on?

Mr. EMMERSON. Yes.

Mr. HACKETT. I have read in the newspapers that one of the piers has settled somewhat and got out of line and that the contractor was not able to go on with the work.

Mr. EMMERSON. The newspaper was misinformed. He is going on with the work.

Mr. J. J. HUGHES. The case of the Montreal Turnpike Trust is not parallel with the one in question. The Montreal bridge is owned by a road company, but this bridge will be owned by the people of Prince Edward Island, and it is entirely in their hands whether they shall charge tolls or not.

Mr. MONK. So it is with us.

Mr. EMMERSON.

Mr. J. J. HUGHES. The people of Prince Edward Island will no doubt be pleased with the sympathy which the hon. gentleman shows in their affairs, but this matter is entirely in their own hands. The government will not levy a toll if the people do not wish it.

Mr. MONK. Does not my hon. friend think it would be a great advantage to the people who are going to use the bridge, to have the certainty that no toll will be charged?

Mr. J. J. HUGHES. That will be a matter for the people themselves to decide.

Mr. MONK. In the neighbourhood of Montreal the roads are government roads. They are under the control of the trusts who represent the government. On the Island of Montreal some of these trusts are appointed by the Minister of Finance and some by the local government; but as a matter of fact the roads to which I refer, and in connection with which the abuses I have condemned exist, are under the control of the people of the province of Quebec. It appears to me a pity that we should create an abuse among the people who are going to use this bridge. It would be better it should be a free bridge just as are the Inter-provincial bridge here and others being built now.

Mr. J. J. HUGHES. Perhaps it will.

Mr. MONK. What makes my hon. friend think it will? Had we not better, since we are paying for it, make sure of that now?

Mr. J. J. HUGHES. The province is paying for it.

Mr. MONK. Is the province contributing in any measure to the construction of the bridge?

Mr. J. J. HUGHES. I do not want to split hairs. The province is paying the interest on the cost of that portion of the bridge.

Mr. EMMERSON. Unless the bridge be built, the people of Prince Edward Island will have to continue their ferry, which has been in operation there for generations, at the expense of the people, and the ferry costs the people a much larger sum than would these tolls. It is a matter of provincial arrangement. The people, I presume, will know what is best in their own interest; and as they are contributing a large amount, I do not see that we need worry ourselves about the matter.

Mr. FIELDING. In any case it is not the business of this government to supply free roads either to the people of Prince Edward Island or of Quebec. In this case the people of Prince Edward Island are giving a contribution which is supposed to represent the interest on the cost of constructing that portion. And whether they charge tolls or not is a matter for themselves to determine. If they like to tax themselves, that is their business and not ours.