

*Trans-Canada Highway*

I now desire to congratulate the minister and the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) on the vision, faith and all-round statesmanship they have displayed in initiating a policy of federal aid for the provinces which is more ambitious and more promising than anything that has hitherto been advocated or suggested in the Dominion of Canada. I believe that their names will go down in history with honour because of this action. I do not believe they have gone nearly far enough, as I shall indicate, but they have made a good start; and because of that they deserve the gratitude of everyone in the Dominion of Canada.

Before I say any more, I believe that I should suggest the principles which ought to underlie expenditures in Canada upon trans-Canada highways. I believe that there should be federal aid for, as I have already indicated, a system somewhat comparable with the inter-regional system in the United States. I believe that the appropriation should be greatly increased beyond what is even dreamed of at the present time, and I believe that Canada is perfectly capable of meeting the commitments under such an increased appropriation. I believe that the dominion should undertake to pay a considerable share of the expenditures during the ten years just past upon highways that, after careful consideration, shall be found to be part of that system. For example, if we are dealing with Nova Scotia and we find that a certain portion of the highways which she has built as a province should be included under the system of trans-Canada highways, then certainly Nova Scotia should, I believe, be reimbursed to the full for the money she has expended in the construction of those highways during the past ten years. That does not need to be all done in one year. It could be done over a period of years, say ten years, greatly to the advantage of the whole of the Dominion of Canada.

I believe that we should broaden the basis of federal support to include not only the construction but the maintenance of highways. As was well developed by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Low), the cost of maintenance is excessive. Anyone who has had any experience whatsoever in maintaining provincial highways knows that.

I believe that the next principle is this. We should leave the provinces to determine how and where the money will be spent upon highways that shall have been agreed upon as appropriately constituting parts of the trans-Canada highway system. There are a number of people who seem to think that the provinces are unable to spend the money wisely. All anyone needs to do is to listen to the hon. member who has just taken

his seat. All he needs to do is to go into Nova Scotia and see what has been accomplished there with the most meagre financial resources. He will come away with the deepest respect for the people who administer that province and the other provinces of the maritimes. No one can tell me that the provincial governments are not alive and prudent, in a general way at least, in the expenditure of money which comes into their hands. Therefore I say, let the provinces decide where the road is to be built. They will decide. They are interested in the development of Canada just as much as anyone in Ottawa could possibly be.

The hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Argue) gave us an idea concerning what the United States has done for highway construction. Probably there are several things I might say which might be in addition to his excellent contribution. I think the hon. member truly gave us a most instructive, informative and perhaps inspiring address.

In the main the United States efforts began with Woodrow Wilson. He encouraged expenditures from the federal treasury for the construction of so-called "post roads". That was a long time ago. The United States has a bureau of roads which co-operates actively with state highway departments. Entirely adequate sums of money are placed at the disposal of engineering staffs of federal and state agencies for preliminary engineering purposes, and thereby serious mistakes are avoided.

In 1941 congress voted \$10 million as aid toward planning for primary highways. In 1943 congress voted \$50 million for planning of post-war highway work in all the states. If I may suggest so, the federal government in the United States is doing the thing in a big way, in a correct way and in a sound way. Past expenditures on roads between 1931 and 1942 inclusive in the form of federal aid in the United States amounted to \$209,327,417 annually, matching equal gross sums from the forty-eight states. Between 1934 and 1942, 2.9 per cent of the total national revenue was spent on roads; .8 per cent was spent by federal authorities. If this ratio were continued it is estimated that \$2,250 million would be provided for highway construction. Whether or not the United States will follow that ratio is not quite clear. In addition to that, they were spending \$750 million for a proposed national inter-regional highway system.

I wish to direct the attention of the house tonight, if I may, to that inter-regional highway system, the like of which I believe we should develop in Canada. In fact I believe it is our duty inasmuch as we are jointly

[Mr. Blackmore.]