

must say that indirectly it is an attempt to do what it does not have the courage to do directly, which is wheeling and dealing. I do not particularly favour the bill, but I must say, although I agree with your reservations, I am prepared to discuss it. However, I certainly do not intend to let it go through tonight.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I must say to the hon. member that the Chair had decided to let the bill come to a debate, with all the reservations I have given. I do not know that hon. members should be allowed to question the Chair, disagree with the Chair or support the Chair at this time, so I think we should proceed.

**Mr. Ian Watson (Laprairie)** moved that Bill C-272, to provide for the establishment of a Canada-Alaska and Maine Corridors Authority, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I should like to speak very briefly to the point of order. If you are shaking your head, I shall not do it; but it seems to me that the bill refers only to the creation of an authority which would not involve the expenditure of money. I would argue this is one method which members of parliament have to bring matters to the attention of the House and the Canadian public which is not limited in the way motions are limited. We are allowed only one motion per session. This is another way of doing it. I really feel there should be no restriction on the format.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I do not wish to argue with the hon. member. He is entitled, if he can get together with other hon. members, to have the rules of the House revised. In the meantime, I would suggest he proceed with discussion of the bill.

**Mr. Watson:** Bill C-272, to provide for the establishment of a Canada-Alaska and Maine Corridors Authority, has as its purpose the finding of a solution to a major transportation problem affecting Canada by means of an international pact between Canada and the United States of America. The idea is that the government of the United States would agree to pay the full cost and maintenance of a highway corridor running from the Quebec eastern townships autoroute at the Quebec border across Maine and/or New Hampshire to link up with the New Brunswick highway system somewhere in southwestern New Brunswick.

**An hon. Member:** Where?

**Mr. Watson:** That would be left to negotiations between the parties, who would necessarily be the two senior governments as well as the state governments of Maine and perhaps New Hampshire and the provincial governments of New Brunswick and Quebec.

In return for the assumption by the government of the United States of all the costs relating to that highway across the top of Maine, the Canadian government would agree to spend an equal amount of money on upgrading the Alaska Highway which lies within its territory, mostly within the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia and the Yukon Territory. This suggestion combines the proposal, which has been made by a number of members which involves the creation of an Alaska High-

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way Authority to provide for the funnelling of substantial funds into that highway, with a formula that would provide for the solution of the eastern problem of transport and vehicular communication within the Canadian maritime provinces.

While at first glance this may seem to be a bit far-fetched, I would argue that it is totally reasonable and rational. I cannot understand why the federal government has not given this more serious consideration than it has until now. This is not a proposal, as some members would have the public believe, to have the Alaska Highway paved. The amount of money that would be involved in paving the Alaska Highway is indeed an astronomical amount which far outclasses the amount of expenditure the United States government would be required to spend on the Maine highway.

● (1710)

What is needed on the Alaska Highway now, within Canada, is the rebuilding of approximately 300 to 400 miles of that highway and the paving of portions of it in populated areas. The government of Canada is going to have to do this anyway in the next few years. That necessary expenditure would in itself surpass what the American government would spend on the Maine highway, so all that would happen would be that by making that sort of arrangement with the United States, we would do what we must necessarily do in the way of repair on the Alaska Highway in the next few years and the American government would then have a legitimate excuse to go into Maine, spend money on that highway and build a highway of interstate standards. This would not set a precedent for funding elsewhere in the United States. It would be of benefit in a number of ways, which I will now argue, not only to the tourist-minded public of eastern Canada but it would also be of enormous benefit to a substantial population of the northeastern United States.

**Mr. Paproski:** It would fulfil the promise the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) made in 1972.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Don't kill the bill.

**Mr. Watson:** Probably one of the strongest arguments for this corridor would be that it would promote Canadian unity. Imagine the difference in the tourist business in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Newfoundland if it were possible to drive from Montreal to Prince Edward Island in less than a day. Imagine the difference if we could drive from Toronto, if we got up early enough in the morning, to Prince Edward Island in one day. This is just not practical now unless we want to drive day and night. If this highway is built across Maine, within reasonable speed limits it would be possible to arrive in Prince Edward Island after approximately a nine to ten-hour drive from Montreal. This is the kind of estimate which is always a guess, but it is reasonable to assume that if people do not have to stop overnight, and if they can be assured of getting down to the beach after one day's drive, not just a doubling, but a tripling or quadrupling of the number of potential tourists would be available to supply business to maritime tourist operators.