

*Government Orders*

I think it behoves someone in this House to say: "Come on now, you know that the process was less than clean". I am not suggesting that the Minister of Public Works is fully responsible for what has come about here, but certainly it is a problem.

The whole fixed link project was not driven by anyone from any government. It was driven by a private developer saying: "Hey, would you not like to have a bridge or a tunnel? Do you not think that would be a great idea?"

I suppose many private developers are altruistic and they want to help the people of Canada. However, once in a while one does come down the line that perhaps is not so altruistic and does not want to build a billion dollar bridge just to help out the residents of P.E.I., New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and assist the tourism industry in Canada. We must at the least be suspicious of what is going on here.

Certainly we look at the process and the studies and our ice experts versus their ice experts. A study was done in 1988 when there was a very mild winter and a low ice condition. They said that was the wrong time to do the study. The Friends of the Island are saying to us: "Boy, if you were out there this year you would have seen the conditions on which studies should have been done", not at the low time but at the high time in order to get the full impact of what this bridge may do to the provinces involved.

There have been studies. One of the studies we questioned was a generic study on a generic crossing. Now they say: "Do an environmental assessment on this bridge, bridge *x* or bridge *y*, it does not really matter". Now there is a real bridge, there is a real proposal, but there has been no final ultimate study done environmentally as should have been done.

SCI, the proponent of the bridge, was asked to react to the Federal Court ruling that, no, the government did not follow the process properly, this final environmental review was not done. The government in its wisdom or lack thereof said that SCI had better react to this other study. So we are studying our own studies. Lo and behold, to the surprise of no one, the study that SCI did was acceptable.

• (1040)

If you are a proponent of anything and you study it, you are going to come out in favour of the particular proposal. There have been economic benefits studies. A government consulting agency hired and paid for by the federal government said it is not economically beneficial to Canada. It just does not fit. The numbers conflict. It is not acceptable. Another study was done which says it may in fact be economically viable.

No matter what study has been done economically or environmentally there is always another group saying that no, the figures are faulty, the environmental impact findings are faulty, it was done at the wrong time. Continual conflicting reports come forward.

Someone said that most of the Islanders want this. They had a vote on it. I think the vote was 60—some per cent to 30—some per cent but that was several years ago on this generic bridge. Does it not beg that we do not continually discuss this generic bridge?

At committee it was said that when the ice floe comes through it may hit one of the piers and put the bridge out of commission. That was absolutely right. It is a concern so what we are going to have to do is put bigger distances between the girders of the bridge. If they are spread out it will solve the problem.

Again it seems that this issue of the fixed link project has been addressed a little bit at a time. As a new wrinkle comes forward we are told it will be solved.

Something that has not yet been addressed, perhaps the provincial government of P.E.I. will address it on Monday, is the possibility of the bridge being out of commission. Constitutionally there must be a ferry in place to transport people. That should have been addressed in the very beginning.

We have continually brought forward solutions to problems as they crop up and here we are at the end of the process when it is still going to the court. I think it is important so I repeat that this is not how any legislation should go forward in this House. It is not a very clean process. It got out of hand. I understand that the government feels we are so far down the road, the private developer has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars and the government has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars, that it does not want to scrap the