

Let me call my honourable friend's attention to these facts. The Canadian National Railway system is government-owned—sometimes we say, to our sorrow, from the financial standpoint. This system owns and operates certain lines in the United States, and I will mention three: the Atlantic and St. Lawrence, running to Portland, Maine; the Central Vermont Railway, Incorporated, running through Vermont; the Grand Trunk Western Railway, running to Chicago. These lines are held by American companies, subsidiaries of the Canadian National Railways. I submit there is no difference in principle between owning a railroad and owning a highway. I do not think anyone in the United States ever has suggested that by our ownership and operation of railways there the territorial integrity or sovereign rights of that country are in any degree adversely affected. Conversely, the purchase of freehold property in Canada by individual citizens of the United States does not arouse comment. No one is concerned about such transactions prejudicing the sovereign rights of Canada.

My honourable friend directed his main argument to the question of the maintenance of our neutrality in the event of the construction of the proposed road. Three situations might develop: the United Kingdom might be at war, say, with an Eastern power; Canada might be at war in alliance with the United States; the United States might be at war with Japan.

Let us imagine Canada at war. Then the Alaska highway would certainly be no disadvantage. In fact, I have under my hand a petition to His Majesty's Privy Council for Canada which seems to indicate that the road would be a distinct advantage; but apparently the petitioners are mainly concerned to have the highway routed through Edmonton. The petition is dated March 6, 1939, and is signed by their respective presidents and secretaries on behalf of the Alberta Motor Association and the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, and by the chairman for the joint committee of those two bodies. Let me give honourable members the first paragraph:

The petition of the undersigned humbly submits:

1. That a highway constructed for military purposes ought to be constructed:

(a) Where it is possible to keep communications open for the longest period of the year with the greatest ease;

(b) Where it will be least accessible for destruction by enemy attack;

(c) The above-mentioned essential conditions being given due consideration, where the way will be most easily constructed and maintained;

(d) Where the way will be most accessible to the greatest number of junctions with other highway connections;

(e) Where it may be served by the largest number of other transportation facilities.

I am rather surprised at my honourable friend not letting charity begin at home. I have no doubt he is a prominent member of both the Alberta Motor Association and the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce. Surely he should have devoted his missionary work to the enlightenment of his own constituents, for, had he pointed out to them the grave dangers lurking in this proposed highway, they might not have fallen into the error of submitting this two-page petition to the Government of Canada.

As to what might happen in the event of Canada and the United States being jointly at war, surely my honourable friend would not for a moment suggest that this Alaska highway would be a menace to our nationhood if the two countries were allied.

I come now to the third point, the preservation of our neutrality in the event of a war between the United States and Japan. I was so much interested that I read not only my honourable friend's speech of last Monday, but also a speech of his delivered in this Chamber in 1934, in which he dealt with international law and pointed out what might happen if we did not have an armed force sufficient to maintain our neutrality. All I have to say is that if the only occasion for an armed force would be to maintain our neutrality in the eventualities which he has conjured up, it is certain that the people of Canada would never become very much exercised over the lack of military preparation.

But let us consider the maintenance of our neutrality on the supposition that the United States is engaged in a war with Japan. As, apparently, my honourable friend did not approve of my interpretation of what he said, I would direct attention to this citation from his speech of last Monday, as it appears near the top of page 360 of the unrevised edition of the Senate Debates:

It is obvious that the road is not in competition with sea-borne traffic at all, and it can be of no value whatever except for military purposes.

Presumably he means it would be of no value except to the United States. Now follows the part to which I would draw particular attention:

It would be urgently needed only if the United States lost control of the north Pacific ocean in a war with Japan. Then, of course, it would have an outstanding value to the United States.

I want honourable members to get the full implication of that statement. I do not think my honourable friend has ever realized what would be the viewpoint of the citizens of British Columbia in that eventuality.