

Northern Affairs

such a way that this authority could reconstruct and pave this tremendously important road. Bills have been introduced in the United States Senate and Congress which would, if approved, permit contribution of funds on a 50-50 basis between the United States and Canada, because of the importance of this highway to Alaska to the United States.

There are other examples that could be cited where this type of authority has been used to accomplish projects which were too big for any particular level of government. I am thinking of the New York world's fair. The New York world's fair authority was established as an autonomous corporation to which the governments of the state of New York and the city of New York as well as the government of the United States were able to contribute in order to make this a joint project.

It is unique in other ways as well, and that is because it is a non-crown corporation. This non-crown corporation would be administered by a body that provides for regional, federal, provincial and other interests. This is the opportunity we have been looking for which would permit the construction of this highway without the long, tedious negotiations that are usually involved in such joint international projects.

Another example where this type of organization has worked very effectively can be found in the United Kingdom parliamentary charity commissioner, and in France in the commissaires-enquêteurs and rapporteurs. This system has allowed deputies of the French chamber and members of the British parliament to participate in various activities which involved different levels of their governments.

● (5:20 p.m.)

It is important to the economy of western Canada as well as to the economy of Canada as a whole to have the tremendous resources of the Canadian northwest developed. Air transport is playing its role in that development, but I submit it is only by utilizing road transportation to the fullest extent that the full potential of that part of the country is to be developed.

Chambers of commerce and members of provincial legislature have shown great interest in this bill. I am sure that the hon. member for Peace River, who seconded my motion to introduce the bill would, if time permitted, vouch for the tremendous interest there is in this project in his part of Alberta.

There is great enthusiasm also for the subject matter of this bill in northeastern British Columbia and in the Yukon territory, as well as in Washington, Alaska and the northwestern states.

I commend the bill most seriously to hon. members of the house. We who are charged with responsibility for overseeing the economic welfare of the entire country, must not fail to recognize the economic benefits that would flow from the development of the highway. Some will say that the cost of building it is exorbitant. Certainly construction costs have risen in the last few years. Originally when hon. members of this house began talking of this project they envisaged an expenditure of about \$125 million. We are told that construction and paving costs now would exceed \$200 million. The United States government has already said it is willing to pay half this cost, and I am sure that since the Yukon territory and British Columbia stand to gain much from the project they would be willing to share in the cost of construction. Alberta thinks the project is so important that it has gone ahead and completed that portion of the highway leading to the border of British Columbia, the construction standard of which is higher than would be necessary if there were not extensive commercial traffic.

I commend this bill to the government. Since the economy of western Canada, to say nothing of the economy of the entire country, will benefit from the completion of this highway, I submit action ought to be initiated immediately. We must not procrastinate any longer. This is the kind of investment that pays for itself. It is important to the general development of our economy. I submit that the government will find no better way of approaching this matter than by allowing this bill to pass second reading, so it can be referred to the standing committee on national resources and public works.

Mr. Jerry Pringle (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, I am impelled to rise in support of the intent of this bill and wish to commend the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) for drawing the attention of this house to the importance of the Alaska highway in the continuing development of Canada's northland. Areas in Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon, from Edmonton to Fairbanks, have benefited greatly as a result of the highway, which was rather hurriedly constructed by the United States government during the