



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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ROADS TO RESOURCES

Notes of Speech prepared for delivery to the Canadian Good Roads Association by Mr. John G. Diefenbaker, Prime Minister of Canada in Montreal, October 2, 1958.

... From the earliest historical times good roads have been one of the marks of a successful society. The remains of the Appian Way, the Flaminian Way, and other great roads constructed by the ancient Romans still stand as monuments to a highly developed civilization.

A few years ago the International Road Federation of the United States made a survey of highway facilities and needs of many countries for the Technical Co-operation Administration of the United States as a guide for assistance to underdeveloped countries.

In the introduction to this survey by Mr. Horace Bushnell, the following excerpts appear:

"If there is any kind of advancement going on, if new ideas are abroad and new hopes arising, then you will see it by the roads that are building. Nothing makes an inroad without making a road.....The economic and social value of highways must be given top consideration in the development of any country.....Roads are essential to give access to the untapped wealth, mineral forest and agricultural, of any country because they are most vital to integration and social and economic progress of a nation".

The importance of good roads has been amply confirmed by history and even today in the context of the Twentieth Century, with all the fantastic means of transportation available to us - of which trans-polar trips by nuclear submarines and excursions into outer space are the most recent and dramatic illustrations, good roads continue to be an essential factor in national progress and development.

The need of good highways has not and cannot be met by air, water or other land transportation systems. Hundreds of thousands of people in Canada depend on highway transportation for goods and particularly perishable products and as a means of disposing of the products of their labour. As a matter of record 73 per cent of cattle and hogs are moved to the markets without the deterioration that took place in the days before the development of our highway system. The D.B.S., in a current survey, concludes that the total of freight moved by road transport is greater than that carried by all other means of transport. While the results of the survey are incomplete, they would indicate that some 240 million tons are carried by road against 170 million tons by rail, 30 million tons by water, and 2 million tons by air.

The daily transport of thousands of children to consolidated schools has been made possible by the construction of roads, and a child on the back concession is given an opportunity for education equal to that of a child in the more populated areas.

Unlike ancient Rome, Canadian roads do not all lead to the Capital City; nor do they originate there. In a federal system with its division of jurisdiction, sometimes exclusive, sometimes overlapping, the major share of responsibility for road construction has rested traditionally with government at the provincial and municipal level. This is as it should be, for government should be kept as close as possible to the people it serves.

Having regard to the difficulties of construction in many parts of our country and the vast distances involved, the provincial and municipal governments have done an outstanding job in developing a system of roads and highways that is unrivalled by any nation of comparable population and size. Indeed, some of the road-marking devices and other features of the provincial highways systems are regarded as models of their kind by many of the States of the Union to the south of us. It is a fact not too widely realized that Canada has more surfaced roads per capita than the United States. Surfaced roads have almost doubled since the beginning of the Second World War, and almost 100,000 miles have been added since that war ended.

The total expenditure last year on roads amounted to \$614 million, of which 65 per cent was by the Provinces, 22 per cent by the Municipalities, and 4 per cent by the Federal Government, and the balance by private industry or others.

Although the primary responsibility for roads rests with the provinces and the municipalities, it has been recognized increasingly in recent years that there are national considerations which warrant federal financial participation in co-operation with such provinces as desire road building. For example, the central government has assumed responsibility for roads in

Canada's eighteen National Parks; certain roads in and around civilian airports and defence installations; and a number of important driveways forming part of the development of the national capital.

The outstanding example of federal interest in good roads has been until last year, the Trans-Canada Highway. Working in the very closest co-operation with the various participating provinces, the Federal government has already invested more than \$160 million and is committed to an additional expenditure of nearly \$100 million on this national undertaking.

Furthermore, it is the Federal Government's intention to contribute one half of the costs, up to a maximum of \$2 million, to an important auxiliary project of setting up picnic areas and campgrounds at regular intervals along the route of the Trans-Canada Highway, suggested by a number of the provinces at last year's Federal-Provincial Tourist Conference.

This offer has been sympathetically received by a majority of the provinces and the work on this programme will, I hope, get underway during the coming winter.

The provisions of facilities of this kind along the Trans-Canada Highway should do much to promote tourist traffic - a growing source of revenue to Canada; to make travel on the Highway safer by providing attractive resting places; and to strengthen national unity by encouraging more interprovincial travel by Canadians and to provide winter employment.

I have said that, until recently, the Trans-Canada Highway has been the most important example of federal interest and participation in road building. This is so because road construction has been concentrated very largely in the southern and settled parts of Canada - that narrow band extending northward some 200 miles from the United States border in which nine out of every ten Canadians now live. But beyond this to the north is a vast and largely undeveloped area that is one of the last great frontiers left anywhere on the face of this earth. It is a promising and strategic area, literally unmatched in its resource potential but practically unscratched in its resource development.

Canada produces nickel, asbestos, zinc, lead and copper, titanium, beryllium, iron, etc. As the world enters the atomic age Canada's Northland has become a gigantic carrier of potential defence minerals. The United States is running low. Since 1914 industry in the United States for peace and war has used more minerals and mineral fuels than were consumed by all the world in all the ages. With its mineral potentialities, its forests, its tourist attractions, the great Northland of Canada is no longer a forbidding waste of ice.

What better preparation for the hundredth anniversary of Confederation could there be than to spend the last decade of our first century as a nation in concentrating on the development of that sparsely populated but tempting four-fifths of our national territory that makes up the Canadian north.

Transportation is undoubtedly the key to northern development and in all our plans roads must occupy a prominent place. To this end, the Federal Government has already embarked on two large-scale and imaginative programmes that can and will have the most far-reaching consequences for northern development.

First, under the Roads to Resources policy announced last spring, federal and provincial governments will share equally in the cost of over a \$100 million programme of development roads to be undertaken over the next five or six years. The object of this programme is to make possible by joint contribution of the participating provinces, the construction of roads into undeveloped and underdeveloped areas in the provinces, and eventually to provide links with the northern territories beyond provincial boundaries.

Since this is a matching programme, an effort has been made to keep its total dimensions within the limits of the financial capacities of the participating provinces. Although formal agreements have not been concluded, projects have been agreed to in several provinces on a number of roads that will open to development new areas of known resource potential.

The second road programme is in the two territories - the Yukon and the Northwest Territories - which do not yet have the population or the economic strength to discharge the normal provincial role. These two territories will, in the foreseeable future, have provincial status and will take their place as partners in the Canadian Confederation. The Federal Government is a trustee for the people of these future northern provinces and must take responsibility for the provision of the basic transportation facilities necessary for resource development.

Over the next six or seven years the Federal Government will invest upwards of \$100 millions on development roads in the two territories. Existing roads such as the Mackenzie Highways, the Alaska Highway and the Whitehorse-Dawson road are being used as points of departure. From these, new roads will be pushed into areas which, according to the best technical appraisal available, present the most favourable prospects for development. It is not possible to be entirely assured that development will inevitably result from the construction of these roads any more than the railway builders of the 1880's could be certain that the Canadian West would develop following the railroad construction.

Canadians have overslept in failing to realize the potentialities of the North. Even now many Canadians are in a state of an awakening consciousness. Alaska was colonized before Canada became a nation and has now felt the full impact of southern civilization. Greenland, under Denmark's care, is a generation or two ahead of northern Canada in its development.

The Soviet Union - which has a dozen towns of 50,000 people or more north of the Arctic Circle - has realized the development and strategic demands and needs of the north. Canadians mean to redress this balance, and soon. Nothing can help to do so more quickly than the construction of roads - for lack of transportation, more than climate or any other factor, is the major obstacle to the development of the north.

The building and extension of highways into these Northern areas would pay dividends in national development. Roads will provide for the greater utilization of our resources, which would sustain a high level of economic activity. Such a policy would provide gainful employment, and it would meet the need for defence roads in vulnerable and inaccessible parts of our country.

To Canada as the nearest neighbour of the United States and the U.S.S.R., good roads, in particular into the Northern areas, are essential to the mobility of defence forces and material should war come suddenly. Roads into the Northern area would constitute a vast attraction to the United States' tourists who are eager to travel into the most northerly areas.

Under private enterprise the initiative for resource development must come from individuals or companies which are prepared to take a calculated risk based on their faith in the future potential of the resource concerned. But there is a role for governments as well - an important role to be carried out if the efforts of individual initiative are to be encouraged and not restricted. It seems to me that it is the clear responsibility of government to provide opportunity for the development of our national wealth for the benefit of all Canadians.

I would be the last to suggest that nothing has been done in the past. Many venturesome spirits did traverse, explore and settle those faraway parts, but for decades after 1867 we Canadians were busy becoming a nation. The development of the West - which could never have happened had not men of vision and confidence undertaken the construction of a trans-continental railway absorbed the pioneering energies of Canadians until after the turn of the century. Since then, Canadians have been preoccupied with wars and rumours of wars, and the development of the industrial heartland of central Canada. The possibilities of our north have been largely forgotten or ignored.

Now, in this last decade of our first century, we are once again on the threshold of a new era that can be as exciting and challenging as was the settlement and development of the Canadian West. Maximum development of the North will demand the same courage, faith and hard work. It will require action by government directed to the national interest and must be related to the legitimate claims of all areas and have the confidence and backing of private enterprise.

Within this framework I am convinced that through the partnership of public and private endeavour there can and will be a tremendous development in Canada's north in the next decade. That vast, and as yet largely undeveloped north, contains great forest wealth, much land suitable for agriculture, large untapped hydro-electric resources and, above all, a mineral wealth that will one day dwarf the giant developments that have already taken place in any now developed parts of this country. The open-sesame to it all is roads: not necessarily good roads - a statement I hesitate to make before this audience - but roads, passable roads, the most miles we can get for our dollars - roads that will lead on to resources and untold riches.

In closing I cannot fail to take account of the sobering fact that all our future is today threatened by the ever-present possibility of world conflict. Even as we plan for the development of a greater Canada - a Canada that will prove the prophecy that this was to be our century - we must recognize the fact that we are living in troublous times. We cannot blind ourselves to the fact that all about us, the cross-currents of two competing philosophies are seeking to direct the future course of mankind's history. If this fundamental cleavage in human thinking is to be resolved, there is an important role for nations such as ours which reverence freedom and honour the dignity of the individual.

And so, plan we must for good roads that will lead to greater national development, but over and above our national aspirations we must recognize our broader responsibilities to the world at large and be prepared manfully to do our part to help lead the nations along the good road that leads to progress and prosperity in a world at peace.

S/A