

Causeway, Atlantic Board Spark Lively House

A spirited exchange took place recently in the House of Commons between J.W. Pickersgill, Member of Parliament for Bonaville-Twilligate and Hon. John Fleming, minister of forestry, during debate on the Atlantic Development Board.

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of forestry, during debate on the Atlantic Development Board. The following are excerpts from Hansard in which Mr. Pickersgill took exception to the inclusion of the Prince Edward Island Causeway in the projects to be considered by the board:

Mr. Pickersgill:— I do not intend to make a speech because I made one the other day, but there was one thing which troubled me very much about what the minister of national revenue said on Dec. 4 on the resolution stage. I had expected this matter would have been raised by one of the members from Prince Edward Island, but

it has not been dealt with and that is why I rise to say a few words about it. The minister was talking about the subjects this board might take up. He said that among these were:— the Chignecto complex of canal, tidal power and industrial development; the causeway to link New Brunswick with Prince Edward Island, which has been accepted in principle and is in the planning stage.

I had understood from the announcement when it was made, and I think everyone in the old parliament understood it, together. I am sure, with everyone else, that the project was not one of those which was still being considered. I refer to the Prince Edward Island Causeway. Construction of that Causeway was accepted as something which was going to be done. I think the minister should try to reconcile his statements to the effect that this is still in the stage of study, still in the stage of conjecture— Mr. Fleming:— Would the honorable gentleman mind reading again what I said?

Mr. Pickersgill:— Yes. "There are many policies and projects which have been suggested as deserving urgent consideration." "The minister said this board when it is set up—and it has not even been set up yet—is going to start research into or carry on research. The minister did not say "start." He says it is going to carry on research into the Prince Edward Island causeway.

Causeway Decision Said Already Made

Remember that this is just an advisory board. This is not a board to execute anything and therefore it would seem odd that any project would be put before it about which a decision to act had already been made, or which was supposed to be in the early stages of implementation.

"Here Mr. Pickersgill quoted from a speech made by the Hon. Diefenbaker when he appeared in Charlottetown during the June election campaign: "Since investigations have shown that a causeway is feasible from an economic and engineering standpoint, we are proceeding with the project."

The Prime Minister went on to say even more than he said the project would employ 100 men for six years and provide \$30,000,000 in wages. It would be eight miles in length. It would include one and a quarter miles of locks and bridges. The fill would cost \$40,000,000. Locks and bridges \$20,000,000 and engineering work \$20,000,000. He even went on to predict that it would be completed in time for our centenary in 1967.

Mr. Fleming:— May I interrupt the honorable member? The part I want him to repeat is what he read about what I said a couple of days ago. Mr. Pickersgill:— I shall be glad to do that. The last thing I want to do is to be unfair to the minister or to anyone else. I am merely trying to clear up a serious doubt which arises not merely in my mind but in the minds of other people— Mr. Fleming:— I think we know what is in your mind, but go ahead and read what I said.

Mr. Pickersgill:— I do not pretend to make such large claims as the minister has just made, but I do not think it is a much more complex personality than I am myself. If he knows what is in my mind, perhaps he would consider standing up and making my speech for me.

Mr. Fleming:— I said "I think I know." Mr. Pickersgill:— Now the minister is being his usual modest self again, and we like him better those circumstances. The minister said— I think he had better read the two sentences together: "There are many policies, measures and projects which have been suggested as deserving urgent consideration by the board. A number of public works projects need immediate research."

I emphasize that last word "research." "Among these are the Chignecto complex of canal, tidal power and industrial development; the causeway to link New Brunswick with Prince Edward Island, which has been accepted in principle and is in the planning stage."

"And needs research." I added that from the previous sentence. In other words this project in place not No. 1, but No. 2 among the things that the board would be doing research into. Yet the Prime Minister told us in April— Mr. Fleming:— Research and planning.

Long Way From \$30 Million Spent Mr. Pickersgill:— Surely the planning is not going to be done by this Atlantic Development board. Did not the government tell us not long ago they had spent \$300 on it—or \$8,000. At any rate it was a long way from the \$30,000,000 in wages that were going to be paid. We and the public were led to believe that April that this Prince Edward Island causeway was being started. I do not wish to misrepresent the government. They did not say that the actual construction was being started, but they said this to us again in the Prime Minister's words in Charlottetown on May 17—

Fleming Says 'Hardly Any Case'

Mr. Fleming: No, that is wrong. I am sure my friend does not wish to misquote me. Mr. Pickersgill: No, I do not wish to misquote the minister. Mr. Fleming: Research into the planning to see how it is done.

Mr. Pickersgill: Then what the minister says is this, I do not blame the minister. Nobody would forget the way in which he spoke by the way in which he collected his, who is no honorable member for Rosedale. Mr. David McCreath announced that he would be resigning, but Mr. Pickersgill went over to tell the minister anything about the resignation of Mr. St. John. To find that his colleague had cut the "second" committee off the "first" committee, I do not wonder that the Minister of National Revenue, having gone over to the department from which ministers seem to me more often than they do, to find out whether the Department of Public Works is really going to do anything about this causeway which the Prime Minister said was being proceeded with.

The minister talked the other day about the maze of government departments. He would blame the poor people in Prince Edward Island, even the very intelligent people who write editorials for the very newspaper there, you cannot blame them for being confused. If the minister thinks this parliament has to set up a board to find out how the Department of Public Works is getting on with planning this causeway which was stated by the Prime Minister last April, which was going to be employing all these men, then I think it is not making a very good case. It is a very poor case. It is not a very good case as usual.

Mr. Pickersgill: The minister seems very much disturbed by Mr. Fleming: The honorable member is labouring at it.

Member Charges Slowdown Is On Mr. Pickersgill: The plain fact is, of course, that we have already revealed clearly to us in the many responsive questions, that there has been a slow-down. If there was ever anything to slow down in the first place. Judging from the amount of money that is being spent, there is nothing really serious being done about the causeway at all, and there has not been anything one about the causeway with the exception of the words uttered by the Prime Minister and supporters of the Prime Minister on this subject in the election campaign. One of the hon. gentlemen for Bonaville-Twilligate is a skillful debater and he is a resourceful debater. If there is the least bit of vulnerability in an opponent's argument he seems to have the faculty of putting his finger on it, but today he laboured and he sweated and he stuttered, and had the hardest time I ever saw him have in trying to make even the semblance of a case.

There hardly was any case at all and as I insisted to him as he referred to these things—and he did not go back into ancient history as he usually does, but rather admitted his convenience because he could forget all the things he wanted to get. Finally he came along and picked up the Prince Edward Island causeway and said this bill was really vulnerable on that subject.

He quoted my remarks made a few days ago in which I said that the project was already accepted in principle. Mr. Pickersgill: More than in principle. Mr. Fleming: Just a minute— was already accepted in principle and was in the planning stage. Then he proceeded to get terribly indignant and said it should be under construction.

Mr. Pickersgill: I did not say it was under construction. I did not say the government said it was under construction. I said the government said it was under construction and was getting on with the plans. That is why I said that the project was already accepted in principle. Mr. Pickersgill: More than in principle. Mr. Fleming: Just a minute— was already accepted in principle and was in the planning stage. Then he proceeded to get terribly indignant and said it should be under construction.

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Mr. Fleming: Well, Mr. Chairman, I cannot answer that question because I have not got the information with me here. Mr. Stewart: Is the implication that the earlier research was unsuccessful?

Mr. Fleming: I can tell the hon. gentleman this: It was a study and are studying—

Mr. Pickersgill

Mr. Pickersgill: I think anyone who has ever gone across on the ferry from Cape Tormentine to Jordan, a distance of nine miles, must certainly know that a lot of engineering study will have to go into it. It is a terrifically difficult engineering problem, but coming back to what this gentleman told me—

Mr. Stewart: If I understand the minister correctly he suggests that Northumberland Consultants Limited are going to make detailed research into the engineering feasibility of this project, and he enlarges on the difficulty of the project. I should like to ask him, if that is true, what did \$348,810 spent in 1958-59 achieve?

HON. MR. FLEMING PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Stewart: Are you saying it achieved nothing? Mr. Fleming: And if it would be \$1 more than the Liberal government ever spent on the causeway.

Mr. Stewart: But you are saying it was wasted. Mr. Fleming: Mr. Chairman, I do not mind being asked questions but I submit that honourable gentlemen over there, who do not seem to be able to take it very well, are interrupting and trying to cause a disturbance. I have the floor at the moment and they may have it when the opportunity comes in the regular course of debate. But I do worry about the remarks of the honourable member, unless I have the floor at that moment and they may have it when the opportunity comes in the regular course of debate. But I do worry about the remarks of the honourable member, unless I have the floor at that moment and they may have it when the opportunity comes in the regular course of debate.

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