

(October 19, 1931)

## The Canadian Highway

By HON. WILLIAM FINLAYSON

MR. HARRY SIMTON—It is my privilege to-day to introduce the Hon. Wm. Finlayson. I know a good deal about a man called Bill Finlayson, Paymaster of the 10th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, during the war. I do not know so much about the Hon. Wm. Finlayson. I can certify to his record during the war. Perhaps I cannot speak so well of his political history since that time. However, I would just like to say a few things about him which I think we should know. My informant, close to him in war, said to me: "So you are going to have Finlayson to-morrow. He was the best fellow in the Canadian army and I will tell you why. Now Bill Finlayson didn't have to work more than one day a month, but from the time he came to the brigade until he left he did more work than any officer we had. Whenever the unit had to move, Finlayson for two or three days before the move would be away before the sun, struggling all day long making arrangements for each soldier to be comfortable when he got to the new billets. This was gratuitous and not necessary to hold his position and he stood in the highest possible regard with the troops on account of it." He then made a study of courts martial and so ably represented soldiers before them as counsel that he became known as the soldiers' friend. The Hon. Wm. Finlayson made a study of how to get soldiers from being convicted of any crime, no matter what it was, in the Canadian army and this fellow said, "He got it down so pat, we could not convict a fellow in the whole brigade, no matter what he did, and to make it worse they started to call for him up and down the line, and Finlayson used to take off on his horse and ride all down the line at night to defend some fellow, who would have been convicted but could not

be, because Finlayson got there in time to save him. He has gone on from that until now he is engaged in a great humanitarian effort for the government. There is no problem commensurate with dispensing unemployment relief to the unemployed of Ontario, and to feed those in the position they are in, largely through no fault of their own and largely through no fault of any political party or any particular type of business in which they are engaged. It is an enormous problem and I think the government has selected a man who for sympathy and consideration fills the bill to a "T". He is going to tell us something about his great work. The Hon. Mr. Finlayson.

HON. MR. FINLAYSON—Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the Toronto Canadian Club, your vice-president has embarrassed me more than I have suffered for a good many years. This ancient history of the war, these old-time recollections, have been passed on to him in a very exaggerated form. I fancy since some friend of mine has told him he has increased the exaggeration. I had more trouble defending officers of the artillery than I had defending the men. These associations of the army never fade away at all and some things are always being revived in the most unexpected places. I have met artillerymen in every part of Ontario. The week before last I was going over some of our camps in the Ottawa Valley and I looked into a hut about seven in the evening and saw a pile of old army kit-bags with numbers on them. I said "How many of you have numbers?" "Thirty-five, 45, 31 Battery, C.F.A., sir." But seriously that is one of the things that is making the present situation a good deal easier to try and deal with. I thought when we were told we had to take ten, fifteen or twenty thousand men to Northern Ontario, perhaps we would have a tremendous amount of trouble. I had visions of them deserting, of their getting an axe in the morning and cutting off their toes in the afternoon, and in order to avoid that we formed camps and put in 50 per cent. experienced northern bushmen and the rest from the Don Valley or some other place in Southern Ontario. But I want to say that the men we got from Southern Ontario, including the men

from the Don Valley, have turned out to be a far better lot of men than we ever expected. I don't think the average age is over 35, and the men who have come in from the south have naturally been given jobs that they can fill. While the northern men, more experienced axemen, clear the roadway, the southerner is burning brush, and they are falling into their job very well indeed.

I do not intend to make a speech on the art of road-making, but there are two things extraordinary. I see my old friend, Dr. Hughes, and there are some others who will remember the days in Canada when travel was an individual effort. We went on horseback. If we went on the newer trails in the north, we went by canoe and two, four, six and ten in a canoe. I remember how impressed I was seeing one of the Hudson Bay travelling parties carrying several tons on their way over trails on the Abitibi. Travel was largely a matter of individual effort, and I think everyone who has watched the progress of transportation in Canada felt that we were reaching another stage of collective travel. But there seems to be an entire change, and during the last ten or fifteen years we see we are getting back to individual travel by one, two or three men in a motor car, and an era of truck haulage. And now this trans-Canada highway we are building is another example of where we seem to be getting back to travel by a limited number, akin to the days when the *coureurs de bois* used to travel for the Hudson Bay and North East Company, who opened up that country in individuals and pairs or small bodies.

Another thing that strikes me always, in connection with our road effort now, is that the state, whether it is the contract that we made at Confederation to tie in the east with the Intercolonial Railway or to tie in the west with the C.P.R., the state spends an immense amount of money in railways, and then we develop that railway until it becomes one of the modern advances of the world in the C.P.R. and the C.N.R. I fancy we have the two outstanding railway systems in the world. And now in these last days we proceed to ruin the railway by running a road beside it. All over Canada we have built roads beside our railways. Our

own T. & N.O. Railway we spent \$30,000,000 on, and now we proceed to spend five or six millions building a road beside it. It is one of the peculiarities of modern conditions and one that is difficult to understand.

And travel is becoming more individualistic than that. Last Friday morning one of our camps in Fort Frances on the Fort Frances-Kenora road had an attack of diphtheria. They wired in Friday morning. We got the wire about ten o'clock. We saw the Health Department and they found the nearest center where they had serum was Port Arthur, and by eleven o'clock we had two doctors and a medical orderly leave Port Arthur by air, fly to Fort Frances, and there was a car there to take them to the camp. They flew the distance in a little less than two hours and went out on the road and were in that camp and the men were given the treatment during the afternoon. And the plane came back. It gives one some idea of what transportation is and the possibilities of it, and how remote it is in an attack of that kind.

To-day for the few minutes you have given me I would like to tell you some things in connection with the Trans-Canada Highway. Perhaps you would be interested as to the mileage in the different provinces. It is very remarkable when you work them out, the size of Ontario's mileage compared with the other provinces, and the large amount of the road we have and the comparatively small amount any other province has. These figures are not absolutely correct because the road may be varied in some detail but they are approximate.

Nova Scotia, via Halifax, Truro and Amherst, 130 miles.

New Brunswick, via Moncton, Fredericton, Woodstock and Edmundston, 311 miles.

Quebec, via Rivière du Loup, Quebec, Point Fortune, Trois Rivières, Montreal, approximately seven miles longer if crossing is at Hawkesbury, 368 miles.

Ontario, via Point Fortune, via North Bay, Cochrane, Hearst, Fort William to Manitoba boundary, 1,386 miles. Or via Point Fortune, via North Bay, Sudbury, Soo, Fort William to Manitoba boundary, 1,395 miles. Approximately

10 miles shorter if crossing is at Hawkesbury instead of Point Fortune.

Manitoba, via Winnipeg, Minnedosa and Lazare, 324 miles.

Saskatchewan, via Melville, Saskatoon, Kindersley, Alsace, 487 miles.

Alberta, via Alsace, Drumheller, Calgary, 303 miles.

British Columbia, via Revelstoke, Kamloops and Vancouver, 528 miles. That is a total of 3,837 miles.

You will see that the trans-Canada highway will be almost 4,000 miles from sea to sea and that Ontario has 1,386 or over one-third of the road. The extraordinary thing to me, and I had it verified before I was sure of the figures, is that there are only 368 miles in Quebec.

Then to give you some of the picture as far as Ontario is concerned, we pick up the road at Point Fortune on the Quebec-Ontario boundary and there is some question between Ontario and Quebec as to whether the road will go down the Ontario side all the way or partly on the Quebec side. Quebec says it should go to Ottawa, and then cross over. There is a possibility of a compromise and that it might go on to Hawkesbury where there is a new bridge and cross over. From there to Pembroke is part of the provincial highway system. About 180 miles are now constructed to Pembroke where the provincial highway system starts and we might come under the department of Northern development from Pembroke to the artillery camp at Petawawa which is paved; and another distance is to Point Alexander, and is constructed with water-bound macadam. Up the Ottawa Valley to Mattawa there is a road that is a combination of trails, lumbermen's roads, etc., and for several years we have been working on that road more as a survey. I went over it last year and last week. Our effort has been to bring the new road as near to the edge of the river as possible, so that we would have as many views of the Ottawa river with the Quebec hills on the other side as possible. It isn't always possible because you know every creek that goes into the river has worked out a great big indent and if you stick too close you may have trouble and

certainly expense. There is a hydro-electric scheme here so that it was necessary to get a little back and I am afraid you will say that we should have been closer to the river in order to get the benefit of the magnificent views of the Ottawa Valley.

Our road follows the old road to Rutherglen, 25 miles, and there is an entirely new road following along to Mattawa, Trout Lake, and a number of locks, coming into North Bay. On the Ottawa Valley we are now working on 105 miles here, and we have something over 2,000 men in camps.

In North Bay we start our problems. There are two routes about which everyone must have heard controversy. One side says we should go up the Ferguson Highway, in through the Clay Belt to Swastika, on up the Ferguson Highway to Cochrane and follow the road west through Kapuskasing to Hearst. That road is all constructed, not paved, but all constructed in very good shape, and very easy for development. When you get up beyond here, you are in the lower clay belt, and beyond Cochrane in the upper belt. The other contention is we should, instead of going north of North Bay, go westerly, following the trunk road through Sturgeon Falls and down past Espanola through Blind River, Thessalon, to the Soo. And those people who are in favour of that say we should continue on through the North Shore of Lake Superior to Schreiber. Then some say you should go south-westerly from Schreiber. Others say from Blind River you should go northerly through the Mississauga Valley up to Carleton and then out to Schreiber. Those are the three different routes. The northerly route has the advantage that you would be going through rich agricultural country where there is a great possibility of agricultural development; the southern road to the Soo has the advantage that, although you might go through expensive building, you would be around Lake Superior and you would have one of the spectacular roads of the world. From Sudbury north is probably the most spectacular place we have in the province; and along the north shore nearly every-

one has travelled by C.P.R. and appreciates the views and possibilities across the lake.

From Schreiber there are sixty miles of road to Nipegon not constructed. It is surveyed and we have men in camps in there now. It is a very spectacular bit of road and the C.P.R. clings along the shore. Some places from the end of the train you can see the locomotive. In some places our survey shows us beside the C.P.R., hanging to the lake. From Nipegon to Port Arthur we are built and largely paved. In Port Arthur and Fort William there is the perennial question of how you are going to go equally between the two cities without giving one an inch more than the other. However, very generally speaking we go out on what is known as the Dawson trail, the old Dawson trail that the troops took in the Riel Rebellion and the old trail largely used by the Hudson Bay and Northwest Company. Fort William was the headquarters of the North West. Then you go northwesterly following this line and approximately right beside the C.P.R. and up beside agricultural settlements and Dryden.

There is just this. Why build beside a railway? In the first place the surveying party which laid out the railway probably selected the line of least resistance, the most favourable road to travel, so it is still the most favourable, and the road our engineers selected. Moreover, it cuts down the expense of construction if we have a railway beside us. When you get up to the Dryden district we have nearly 100 miles of road constructed from Dymont to Dryden out to Vermillion. There it is a matter of reconstructing the road that is already in existence, with better lining, better grading, and shortening the road generally. From Vermillion to Kenora there are approximately sixty miles of expensive construction and we have in that place about 1,600 men working at the present time. It will be a beautiful road through Lake country. Then you run into Kenora, and out to the Manitoba boundary we are building. This year in August it was arranged there would be a joint celebration at the boundary, at the opening of the road for the first time between Winnipeg and Kenora, but unfortunately the

Manitoba contractor was not ready, so it has been deferred until next spring. Although the other day a car cut through to Kenora for the first time. They had to be ferried over the river. North of the Lake of the Woods we pass one of the most picturesque roads you can imagine, with views of the Lake of the Woods.

Perhaps I should say something about what the effort will be this season because one of the difficulties of construction of this kind is it cannot be expected that we are going to get a dollar of road for every dollar we spent on the road. There is only a limited amount of work you can do in winter. We can clear roadway in the winter better than any other time. Rock cut can be done fairly well in winter. And you can haul gravel on an ice road across a lake or on a lumberman's road through the woods. That will be gone ahead with this winter, but we are trying to make an effort to have as little finished road next spring as possible, in other words to leave as much of it done so we can do as much tying in as possible. From Pembroke to North Bay I am anxious to complete because that will give everyone in eastern Ontario the opportunity of a new loop which is going to be constructed on the Ferguson Highway from Severn to North Bay just north of Orillia. Then we will have finished the road. Of the whole route 140 miles will be paved and forty miles in good shape.

From Severn to North Bay in the three years we have been working we have cut down the mileage about fifteen miles and cut out thirteen level crossings and there is practically only one level crossing all the way. Next spring there will be a perfect road to Orillia, north to North Bay, and from there we are anxious to have this loop to Pembroke finished so it will be open to southern Ontario and our American friends, through Parry Sound, Muskoka Lakes, down the Ottawa Valley to Ottawa, Kingston, Cornwall and back by southern roads.

In the west it is going to be hopeless to attempt this part in the centre where the road has not been designated. We have had surveys out all summer on that. Many people say: "Why don't you come to a decision?" It is a difficult

decision. This road is much shorter than that. Hearst to Schreiber is longer than the southern road, but not nearly so picturesque, and we are trying to get a comparison of costs. And the effort of my engineers is to try and delay a decision until we get very accurate information, because road building, up there in the clay belt, is expensive work. In one we have no rock cut, but we have to have perfect drainage, and perhaps we may have to carry miles to get disposition of the water; and a road that may be perfect in the summer heat may be hopeless at other seasons. And we have to bring in materials over long expensive hauls. Then the rock construction around the head of Lake Superior is also expensive. Generally speaking the cost of the road will be from ten to twenty thousand dollars a mile, and if you consider the enormous mileage you will see the difficulty and the reason why we should be allowed ample time to get full details and comparative costs and why we should not be forced by public opinion to make a declaration before we are ready. And there is another reason: the trans-Canada will not be finished next year or the following year, but we can finish parts to tie in.

Another point is this. We have a beautiful road just about finished at the international boundary into Fort William, tapping Duluth, Minneapolis and St. Paul and the Middle West. They come to Fort William and Port Arthur and go around to Lake Nipegon, Kakabeka Falls, but the objection always is, "do we have to go back the same road?" For business we go up the shortest road as quickly as possible but the tourist is different. He and his family have saved up \$100.00, \$200.00, \$500.00 or a thousand dollars and they have two or three weeks in which to spend it and they must spend it; and if we send them up to North Bay and tell them to go by Ferguson Highway, and north and see Timagami or Kirkland Lake, which this year or next will be the greatest new gold mine in the world, they say, "where do we come back?" To get the tourist, even the Torontonion, you have to furnish him with a loop, and in the West we are trying to do that by bringing them in at Fort William, and trying to build this section

which leads West to Dryden and Kenora, because next year for the first time Kenora will have an outlet by means other than the C.P.R. So we are anxious to let the tourist come in to Port Arthur, Dryden, Kenora, and to Fort Frances, and then on to the States or on to Winnipeg, and come down through Minneapolis and St. Paul. But we are anxious to have the Kenora section and then the Dryden road east to Fort William.

Even out of the dullest times, the greatest period of depression, there is always some good comes and we of our department have been looking forward to the construction of the trans-Canada highway. These hard times have made it possible for us to take care of the unemployed and put them to work on this road and given us an opportunity we never anticipated and that we thought would not have come for a long period of years. And we have started, without proper preparation it is true, but we are at least using the men available and taking care of men in want, and, instead of resorting to the British system of doles, we are handing out the dole in the form of labour.

The terms on which we hire men are thirty cents an hour for an eight-hour-day, with a deduction of eighty cents a day for board and lodging and a reduction of fifty cents a month for medical fee. The usual deduction for board and lodging has been a dollar. That is what we charge ourselves in our camps. We were able to make a contract with Crawley and McCracken, the only firm in a position to take it. A lot of people say at eighty cents a contractor ought to do very well. But it includes far more. It includes all the cooking utensils, cooks, chore boys and a heating stove in the dining room and sleeping tents, iron cots, mattresses, blankets, pillows, and all that equipment. It involves a capital outlay of from \$20.00 to \$30.00 per man, and in addition the contractor has to have a large investment in a van, that is a canteen supplying boots and shoes, etc., and he has to charge prices that we set, and the prices we set are the standard prices charged for things in the neighbourhood. For instance, cigarettes, the same as Toronto; tooth paste, the same as in the stores; boots and

shoes at prices fixed so they won't be so low that there will be bootlegging to town and yet not so high that men will have to pay unfair prices. We would have had to put about a million dollars into this equipment and when this building was over we would have had a million dollars' worth of equipment from the Quebec to the Manitoba boundaries. And everyone looks on the King's equipment as their own, and it is no more an offence to steal a blanket from the northern development than for a lady getting a fur through the customs without paying duty.

Then we take fifty cents a month for a medical fund. The usual thing is to take a dollar. We may not have a profit. For years we have come out a little ahead. But if you give the services of an aeroplane and a plane like that costs \$40.00 or \$50.00 an hour, but that will not be charged up. But the contract is fair and certainly relieved the department. The men are paid thirty cents an hour, \$2.40 a day, with eighty cents deduction, and it is said we are paying too much, more than the lumbermen. But you forget that is eighty cents a working day, and during winter there will be many hours when they won't be able to work and they will have to pay the eighty cents a day.

The camps are cheap construction because they won't be permanent. Some artists suggested log cabins on picturesque sites for tourists afterwards. Unfortunately log construction is very expensive, to do it well, and these camps are only temporary. They are only cheap board construction with tar paper. But they are properly blanketed and heated and we now have in the camps, our Saturday return shows, almost 5,000 men, and we had 11,000 men so we have 16,000 men, in all. I am glad to say of those 16,000 not a single man has complained, and we have a lot of friendly letters. The men have turned out surprisingly well and they have been willing to work.

I was disturbed when they told us we had to take the Don Valley 4,000 or 5,000 men. Somebody comforted me by saying only about half would go. I was alarmed we would have infectious diseases. We had them examined. The number rejected was trifling and when they paraded, I

think there was only one defaulter, and when we got the four hundred north, I think there has been only one deserter out of the whole lot. The men fitted in extremely well and though they are soft and eating a tremendous amount that is the contractor's outlook. And the contractor takes the view that, though there is nothing so uncertain as the life of one individual, there is nothing so certain as the *average* life of a thousand; and they say there is nothing as uncertain as the quantity a famished man can eat for four or five days, but over five or six months we can tell to a fraction the amount. I have been delighted over the quality of the men from southern Ontario.

The camps are laid out on fairly military lines, every camp flies a Union Jack and at sunrise it goes up and at sunset it goes down. That is about the only military thing about the camps. I got a great kick on the Ottawa river to come on a new spruce fill with the Union Jack flying. One former military officer in charge of a camp said my scouts tell me we have two reds in this camp; and if it becomes apparent, they are going to have to salute the Jack and if they don't, they will be executed at sunrise the following morning. I had difficulty restraining that officer because he had the idea of war discipline. Unfortunately the papers used military terms of labour battalions, etc., but there has been no effort to do it in a military way, although there have been two or three camps laid out in a military way for sanitation and utilising army precautions built on years of experience.

Mr. President, I hope I have not talked in too rambling a way, but this is not a subject that can be treated in an orderly manner and I have a night and day job which has left me no opportunity for adequate preparation. But I want to say to the Canadian Club I would like to have your sympathy; the department would like to have you realize the difficulty we are in, in dealing with this present matter. Men are picked up from the municipality and labour bureau. We have nothing to do with him until he comes to us. The municipality and the labour bureau decide. The money that is given is Dominion and Provincial money and the money of all the people of Canada, and the relief is intended

for all the people of Canada. We are engaged in a national Canadian work just as much as the C.P.R., and we are getting a great example of the genius of Canadians and an example of the power of the Canadian people. Just as we threw a railway across a difficult country, so now we are attempting to build another Canadian road that won't be inferior to any previous efforts of Canada. I hope you won't expect a spectacular road next summer or next year, but I would like you to remember we are making a serious attempt to build a great national highway that will be a permanent asset to the province of Ontario and Canada.

MR. SIFTON—I am sure I express the sentiments of the Club when I say we are very grateful to you for taking time off from very important and onerous duties to come down and give us this address on this important subject. We are very grateful and we wish to thank you.