

a decision one way or the other, especially in view of the importance of the question.

Mr. HANNESSON: Is not the present vote intended for repairs to the existing system?

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I shall come to that in a moment. At this stage we ought to consider not merely the vote now before us—and I may observe here that I intend to support it—but the future possibilities as well. I am going to support this vote, but I want to explain the grounds on which I shall do so. I should not feel justified in voting for this expenditure unless I put my position before the committee. We cannot very well go ahead and spend \$3,000,000 without knowing what our objective is to be.

Mr. CAMPBELL: Two independent staffs of engineers went into the question fully and both reported in favour of Nelson.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I am aware that there are those who favour Nelson, but surely we need not wait until the tracks are actually laid and the terminals built before deciding an engineering question of this character. I may summarize briefly the points which, in my opinion, should be considered in deciding the question of the construction of this railway. According to the evidence, which undoubtedly is conflicting and not altogether conclusive, we may gather the following facts.

The straits are open somewhere between two and four months, with a maximum of fifteen weeks, and this not to be depended upon every year.

Mr. CAMPBELL: Where does the hon. gentleman get his information?

Mr. WOODSWORTH: My hon. friend has studied the question thoroughly and, as he knows, this information is obtained from the various reports that have been submitted to the government, such for instance as the one referred to by the Minister of Railways today, as well as from returns brought down to the House on different occasions by the Department of the Interior, the reports of Mr. McLachlan and so on. I would refer the committee to one rather interesting document which I fancy is about as careful a statement as we may find on this question. This study was made by one of my own fellow townsmen, Mr. W. Nelson Smith, and is reported in the *Engineering Journal* of June, 1924.

As I was going to say, we may gather from the evidence which we have before us that there is a maximum of fifteen weeks during which the straits are open, and this is not to be depended upon every year. Apparently

the months are August, September and October. Before or after would mean delay and would involve specially strengthened ships; and we should also be forced, as has already been mentioned, to move the crop of the previous year. Apparently we should require special aids to navigation involving large expenditures, and as has been so frequently pointed out, it would be commercially difficult to develop a port handling mixed cargoes. That difficulty has been experienced in the case of Quebec in competition with the port of Montreal. The latter port has a much larger city behind it, and all sorts of mixed cargoes are shipped there. That is one reason why it has been so difficult for the port of Quebec to attain the development which some of us had hoped for. Then, operating for but a short period of the year there would undoubtedly be a heavy additional expense in the way of insurance and overhead of all kinds.

I am inclined to think, after looking at the matter from the standpoint of the road as a grain route, that the annual expense would be greater than the saving that would be effected. Possibly in time that might be reversed; but so far as we can see now, basing our conclusions upon the evidence at present available, it would appear that the expenditure involved might perhaps be used to better advantage in subsidizing existing roads rather than opening out this new one. Last of all, may I point out that until we have some control of the shipping situation on the Atlantic, about which we heard so much last year, the shipping combine there could readily neutralize any gains we might make on the railway.

It seems to me that this matter should be frankly faced before we make any very great additional expenditures. In the *Engineering Journal* of June 1924 there appears what strikes me as a very sane resolution as passed by the Engineering Institute of Canada:

That the proposed Hudson Bay railroad be thoroughly investigated from the engineering, economic and national viewpoints before any decision is made to construct, complete or operate the said railway.

I would not go quite so far. I would build to tidewater, seeing that we have constructed so much of the road. But before proceeding to construct expensive terminals and provide necessary aids to navigation we should, I think, have a most careful investigation made into the whole question. I have already said that I intend to vote for the estimate before us, which in my opinion is quite justified. But I do urge that we ought not to be asked next year to vote still further sums without having