

*Supply—Hudson Bay Railway*

even of the estuary of the Nelson river for more than two months or at most two and a half months each year. But when this government came into office it was met with the fact that nothing had been done in the construction of that railway and nothing had been done to keep it in operating condition since 1917 or 1918, and the government undertook an investigation asking for further reports on the condition of the railway at that time. I find a report made to the government by Mr. McLachlan under date of February 7, 1923, which appears at page 35 of sessional paper No. 234A for 1924. The information which the government obtained at that time as a basis for future action reads in part as follows:

The Hudson Bay railway and the Port Nelson harbour works stand in the following positions:

(1) Eighty pound steel rails are laid from The Pas to mile 333, which is the second crossing of the Nelson river.

(2) The remainder from mile 333 to Port Nelson, mile 424, is graded but practically no bridges are built.

(3) A steam-hauled train is operated from The Pas to mile 214 twice a month. On this section the ties are now nine to ten years old, and they cannot hold up a steam locomotive any longer. Heavy expenditures on tie renewals are necessary.

(4) The timber trestles all along the Hudson Bay railway to mile 333 have heaved badly, and the telegraph line is also in very bad shape.

(5) Large quantities of train-hauled ballast would be required to put the 333 miles on which track is laid in shape to support heavy freight business, as the foundation grading is composed of vegetable material which shrinks when loaded.

(6) In the 91 miles between the second crossing of the Nelson river, mile 333, and Port Nelson, there are two rivers to cross, viz., the Limestone and the Airhole. The bridge required in the latter case is quite expensive, and will require a viaduct one hundred feet high and nearly one thousand feet long.

(7) Though the 91 miles between mile 333 and Port Nelson is said to be graded, there is only a mound of vegetable material in place and 80 per cent of the work of making a satisfactory road-bed is yet to be performed in this section.

(8) At Port Nelson an excellent base for operations has been established, and the work done on the artificial island, and on the bridge which connects it with the north shore has stood the test of storms, ice action and tides splendidly.

(9) It could reasonably be said that the harbour works at Port Nelson are advanced to the point where work could soon be begun on sinking the cribs for the deep water dock face, which is designed to lie along a sloping hardpan surface about 800 feet north of the present estuary channel, and three-quarters of a mile south of the north shore of the estuary.

(10) Very little of the 5,500,000 cubic yards of dredging which is required has been done. Up to the time when the work was shut down in 1917, all the plant was used in dredging crib sites, and obtaining gravel and stone from the river bed for the filling of the cribwork, as it was sunk in place.

(11) Careful surveys of the channels leading from the proposed docks to deep water in Hudson bay were made in 1918. These show that it will be feasible

[Mr. Cahan.]

to provide for the accommodation of ships up to 26 feet draft, but no anchorage for such ships can be provided except at huge expense within 22 miles of the proposed docks.

(12) The nature of the estuary and the foundation conditions in it did not permit anything in the nature of a shelter from storms to be provided in the design of the harbour works. It is hoped, however, that the 13 miles of shoal water between the docks and the relatively deep water of the bay will so break up the waves that ships will not suffer damage when lying against the wharves.

(13) The strong tidal currents and the low distant shores will always prevent ships entering and leaving Port Nelson except during clear weather.

(14) The chief difficulty and expense with the dredging at Port Nelson is the disposal of the material in a situation where it will not be subsequently dislodged or carried into the channel which it is proposed to use for navigation.

(15) The navigation season for tramp ships entering and leaving Port Nelson will not be longer than from August 20 to October 20, and even in that period will not be entirely free from ice. In 1917, the estuary was blocked with ice on August 29, and in 1913, the Fox channel ice in Hudson straits blocked the tramp ship Allette and prevented her passing through on about the 10th of October.

D. W. McLACHLAN.

In view of that report and others accompanying it I find a clear inference that the government decided, so far as it came to a decision, not to proceed with the completion of that line, and apparently, at one time, almost decided to remove the rails from a part of that line and prepare for its operation as a light railway with light oil-burning locomotives. As I read these reports I can find no evidence whatever that there is any prospective agricultural development north of The Pas which should induce the building of a road for the purpose of opening up that district. I have some acquaintance with the great Peace river district of British Columbia, and, if this road were to be built for agricultural purposes, I would vote to spend ten dollars to open up that Peace river district for every dollar I would spend to open up the district north of The Pas as an agricultural district.

Mr. DUNNING: Does my hon. friend know the country north of The Pas from personal knowledge, as he says he knows the Peace river country?

Mr. CAHAN: I have never been there, but I am reading between the lines of these reports.

Mr. DUNNING: Between the lines!

Mr. CAHAN: Between the lines as well as the lines themselves. I ask the hon. gentleman, who should know, if there is any agricultural district north of The Pas which