

It has been enshrined imperishably in story by such men as Hakluyt and to-day it is voiced in thrilling song by such men as Sir Henry Newbolt, from whom we had the privilege of a visit the other day. Sir Henry Newbolt is Britain's finest interpreter of the spirit of those early days; through his verse it seems to call to us like a "far bell a-ringing," imploring us not to become urbanized and sophisticated, not to allow ourselves to suffer the blight of soul in which vision perishes and heroic effort languishes.

Coming down to a later time, we find this route associated with traders who for generations enriched themselves through its natural wealth and associated with their prowess was the vigorous contention of the nations of Europe.

I would pause here just to express my appreciation of the decision arrived at by the Department of Interior to preserve for all time to come Fort Prince of Wales on the shores of Hudson bay. There it stands and will continue to stand, we hope, for all time as mute evidence of what this bay and this region meant to minds of the eighteenth century. Surely a route which the ill-equipped Elizabethan seamen conquered, which has enriched generations of traders, and for which nations have contended, has something for the imagination of the Canadian of to-day.

Returning again to the urgency of this route I want to say that for the West it is primarily a matter of transportation. The western farmer has slowly realized that the profits of his toil from year to year are fated to be continually precarious; and that fact has worked upon the mind of the western farmer and the residents of the West generally. The western farmer has felt himself in recent years constantly ground between the upper and nether millstones of high cost of production and high cost of marketing. With respect to the high cost of production, he scarcely knows to-day whether the fiscal system, against which he has protested so many years, or the financial system is his greatest enemy. If he has as much success in attacking the financial system as he has had in attacking the fiscal system a great deal of sympathy is coming to him. With respect to marketing, last session something like a gleam of hope came into the breast of the western farmer, although I am afraid it was almost entirely illusory. He asked the Dominion government for a wheat board and it was granted him, but granted him grudgingly and with much opposition, and, I am afraid, in such a way that it will never be of any use to him. And then as to transportation, he did get some satisfaction, but he had the

chagrin last season of seeing the advantage filched from him by the predatory interests of the Great Lakes. Now, it is this hopeless fight in order to stabilize the products of his toil that has worked upon the mind of the western farmer; and it explains to a large extent the phenomenal revival of interest in Hudson bay which took place last winter. The farmer realizes that this fight is almost hopeless, and the Hudson Bay railway fascinates him because he thinks, and rightly I believe, that it offers at least a partial remedy for the malady of distance from which he suffers. And distance to the western farmer is a malady. It is a blight, just as much as the rust on his wheat is a blight, just as much as foot and mouth disease would be in his cattle; and a few million dollars that the Dominion government might expend in removing this blight would bring a benefit not only to western Canada, but to the entire Dominion.

Mr. MARCIL (Bonaventure): Has the hon. member considered what effect the opening of this route would have on the Canadian National railways?

Mr. BIRD: Well, I have not; other considerations have had precedence in my mind; and having watched the writhings of the western farmer upon the grill of economic conditions during the last few years I think his case has a right to have precedence over the National railways. I believe a way could be found to solve the problem of the National railways, but in the meantime I think the western farmer has a right to go ahead and deliver himself in the most speedy manner he can. The western farmer has come to the point where he sees in the Hudson Bay railway a gleam of hope denied him in other quarters, and the reason is that the Hudson Bay railway brings his farm, his cattle and his grain just one thousand miles nearer to his market. I have read somewhere that the Parisian truck farmer, when he goes from one farm to another, takes his soil with him. He digs it up and carries it away to the new farm. Suppose the western farmers of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta could dig up that wonderful soil of theirs and transport it one thousand miles nearer Liverpool, imagine what that would mean to them. You will see, then, why they insist on this thing. In conclusion, let me refer to another aspect of the question which is not quite so tangible as those I have dealt with, but which is just as important, and that is the psychological effect that the completion of the Hudson Bay railway would have on the western farmer. We have heard recently some talk about the discontent of the