

Work on the Hudson Bay railway was started by the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1910. The present Acting-Minister of Railways (Mr. Graham) turned the first sod at that time, and I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that it would give us a great deal of satisfaction if before the end of the present season we could see the same hon. gentlemen drive the last spike. When Sir Robert Borden assumed office in 1911 he and his party again investigated the scheme, and the result was that they also were convinced of the feasibility of the work and the advisability of carrying it on. Work proceeded slowly during the war years up to 1918, when, without any apparent reason, except possibly that of necessity for economy, the work was stopped, and during the past four years or more nothing has been done.

The railway consists of 424 miles from the Saskatchewan river at The Pas right to the bay. The grading has been done to the bay, but there still remain 92 miles of steel to be laid, and it is for the purpose of asking the government to proceed to lay that 92 miles of steel and to bring the road up to the necessary standard that we are pressing for a reconsideration of the matter.

Mr. MACLEAN (York): Is any part of that line in operation to-day?

Mr. KNOX: Yes, a part of it is in operation, but only once every two weeks. I have not the exact mileage—

Mr. GRAHAM: Two hundred and fourteen.

Mr. KNOX: Two hundred and fourteen miles; a train goes out every two weeks. The amount of money expended on the road up to the time the work was stopped was something like \$14,000,000, and on the terminal at Port Nelson, nearly \$6,000,000. It was shown on the evidence of the Deputy Minister of Railways, Mr. Bell, before the Senate committee which sat in 1920, that the balance of the \$25,000,000 which had been estimated as the amount necessary to complete the whole work, would actually have completed it, terminals and all.

It is not my intention to discuss at great length on this occasion the feasibility of the project, because that has been established time and time again. The report of the Senate committee, in which the view was expressed that the project was feasible and would likely be profitable, was placed on Hansard by myself last year; I do not therefore, care to take up the time of the House now by going into it further. I would like, though, before leaving the question of the feasibility of the

scheme, to read a short extract from a speech delivered by Sir James Loughheed in the Senate on May 15, 1918. He said:

I have no doubt that when that road is completed, as completed it will be, it will be found of inestimable advantage to the development of that western country.

Further on he said:

Permit me to say that so far as the carriage of materials is concerned, construction work has not been proceeded with seriously since 1914, but in that year no less than 36 passages through the straits, through the bay, and through the estuary were successfully made, over 20,000 tons of freight for the construction of that road being carried. The ships which navigated the straits were not built for the ice traffic they were simply tramp steamers without any special constructive features for this particular navigation; yet during that year those ships, not at all adapted for the navigation of the waters in that Hudson straits, made no less than 36 passages. It seems to me that should be unanswerable evidence of this fact.

I would also like to read a short extract from a speech delivered by the late Hon. Frank Cochrane, who was Minister of Railways in the government of Sir Robert Borden. After making a personal inspection of the proposed route, this is what he had to say:

I have every faith in the scheme and I will push the Hudson Bay road for all I am worth. We intend to make this a good road—we have a four-tenth grade; we are using 80-pound rails. I believe the Hudson Bay route will mean much to the West in the way of lower freight rates.

If the Solicitor General (Mr. McKenzie) were here I would call his attention particularly to this:

Just consider how much cheaper iron, steel and coal, for instance, from Sydney, N.S. would be shipped to the prairie. It would be the greatest advantage to the East and I believe eastern opposition is dying out. We found the bay free from ice, in fact the only ice we saw to amount to anything were the bergs near Belle Isle where all the Atlantic steamers encounter them. The straits are very wide and with the aid of wireless I believe can be kept open for a long period. The early settlement in the North West was made through Hudson bay and straits and what sailing vessels have done steamships can accomplish with much more ease.

I think I am justified in dismissing that side of the argument. Taking it for granted that the feasibility of the undertaking has been demonstrated, and nothing to the contrary having been established, I think we can dismiss the argument in that respect. What I want to impress upon the House is the absolute necessity for more outlets.

Mr. CLARK: How many months of the year would the route be open?

Mr. KNOX: The senate committee state, from the evidence laid before them, that they consider that the route could be kept open four months of the year, and, with up-to-date appliances, probably much longer.