

All explorers agree that a ship of ordinary construction runs a tremendous risk in venturing into these waters. The cost of transportation on this water route cannot be accurately stated by anyone. In the first place, a special class of ships would have to be used in order to resist the ice; the navigating season is uncertain and very short; the ships engaged in such traffic would have difficulty in finding work to do when they were not engaged on this route, owing to their special construction.

Due to the uncertainty of time occupied in a voyage, a larger quantity of fuel would have to be carried than under ordinary navigating conditions, as all records show the delays en route are inevitable.

I have not any information of a definite character which would indicate the expense of insurance on ships and cargoes, except that it would be higher than the rates charged on the St. Lawrence route after November 25, when navigation is supposed to close.

There will be little return cargo for this shipping, and this must add to the cost of one-way cargoes.

The larger proportion of grain produced on the prairies and shipped via Nelson will have to be held in storage at Nelson over winter, and shipped during the next season beginning with August, and as this long inaccessible storage will prevent the grain owners taking advantage of the market, I cannot see what inducements this route holds out to grain shippers.

Any port facilities at Nelson will have to be on a large scale, prepared to do in three months what Montreal does in seven. This means an enormous development in docks and elevators, and a tremendous fleet of uncommon ships to carry the cargoes.

Demurrage on ships too will be a very considerable drawback, tending to increase rates, for from the experience of every navigator, delays have been met with and are looked upon as the ordinary conditions of navigation in that latitude.

The coal or oil will take up a large proportion of cargo space; the necessarily heavy construction of the ship will also tend to limit cargo space, so that altogether a set of conditions arises which prohibit economic operation as compared with other navigating routes, and after reading carefully all the available reports, I cannot but come to the conclusion that this route has not any commercial features to recommend it.

This is not a local question, but one which affects Canada as a whole, and I can only emphasize what I have already said, that we as Canadians should bend our efforts to improve the present safe and sure routes of traffic and under no pressure whatever lend our support to schemes which are doubtful and which would divert our energies from practicable lines.