

*Supply—Hudson Bay Railway*

Robert Borden, and men of almost equal standing, all of them alike caught this spirit which was possessing Canada at that time, this desire to see that western country developed to its utmost. I do not think it is fair, I do not think it is advisable to detract from the history of our parties more than is necessary, and the parties certainly were not deserving of that criticism at that time, because I believe with all my heart that they responded inevitably to what was a national aspiration and a national demand at that time.

As usual, Mr. Chairman, when a person speaks without preparation he tends to run to length.

Mr. FOSTER: What rivers does the hon. member refer to that are navigable for two hundred miles from Hudson bay?

Mr. BIRD: The Thelon river, for one. Perhaps the hon. gentleman knows the geography well enough to know where that is.

Mr. FOSTER: Will you tell the House where it is?

Mr. BIRD: The Thelon river is on the eastern side of the watershed which divides the eastern side of the Northwest Territories from the west. The Mackenzie basin is on the one side, and the basin of the Thelon is on the other. The Thelon river is admittedly one of the greatest rivers in Canada. Anyone who wants to find out about the river only need to apply for a pamphlet issued by this parliament, and written by Mr. Tyrrell, who himself was one of the most recent explorers, in fact, the only Canadian explorer of that country. It was explored many years ago by Samuel Herne and men like that, British explorers, but Mr. Tyrrell was the first Canadian, I think, who ever took an accurate survey of the great Thelon river, and as soon as the port is established at Nelson, the Thelon river will be within a day or so of Port Nelson, and surely it will bring business to the road because that is one of the finest fur-bearing countries in the world. Its mineral wealth is great; in fact, it has been noted for centuries as a place where the mineral possibilities were almost mythical in magnitude. In regard to copper, there is a district up there called the Copper Mine country. Anyone who exercises his imagination only a little must realize what immense possibilities lie in opening up even a river basin like that, which is navigable for three or four hundred miles from its mouth even by ocean-going steamers, not to speak of the reaches beyond which would be open to

[Mr. Bird.]

smaller craft, to canoes and the like. That territory has sometimes been called barren, but that is a sad misnomer for that important part of Canada.

Mr. FOSTER: Where does that river open into the bay?

Mr. BIRD: About two hundred miles north of the Churchill river.

Mr. FOSTER: It is frozen all the year round.

Mr. BIRD: I beg to differ from the hon. gentleman. That very river was the channel which the ancient seekers after the northwest passage navigated. The river was so mighty that they thought they had found the passage; they thought it was a branch of the sea leading to China, and those noble men of old sailing in there in their little cockleshells went down the river for hundreds of miles until they tasted the water and found that it was getting fresh, and they turned back home. My hon. friend says it is frozen all the year round. That is a little more of his sentiment.

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): My hon. friend made a reference to Mr. Tyrrell, the engineer. Did he report in favour of the Hudson Bay railway or against it?

Mr. BIRD: I do not think that Mr. Tyrrell ever made a pronouncement on the Hudson Bay railway.

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): He has written articles on it.

Mr. BIRD: Yes, and perhaps the hon. gentleman has something in his mind—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. BIRD: I meant something specific. However, I will venture this statement: If all the members in this House to-day were animated by the same spirit that animated Mr. Tyrrell there would be no question about the Hudson Bay railway. To him and his brother, I think, Canada owes more with regard to our existing great unexplored territories than any other men that went up into them, not excluding the type of explorer sent cut by Great Britain. The Tyrrell brothers were scientific geologists who traversed the country not only because it was their business to do so but because they loved it with a great love. Those men were enthusiasts, and I really think that if we had to depend upon the statements of the Tyrrell brothers there would not be much doubt as to the Hudson Bay railway becoming an actuality.