

far ahead of Alaska as a desirable country in which to live. The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, roughly speaking, divides the province into two great areas, the north and the south. There is as much provincial territory north of that railway as south of it, and the northern half is virtually an undiscovered and unknown country. With few short exceptions there are no highways north of the Grand Trunk Pacific; the country has not been opened up. In that vast area and in large sections of the Yukon we have the last Great West on the North American continent. Anyone who says that a road traversing the very heart of that great area, a road which would open up a new territory half the size of the whole province of British Columbia, would be useless to British Columbia and Canada, has in my opinion a very small conception of what our Dominion is and of the resources in that part of it.

Now, honourable members, I have been able to get some information of a definite type about the territory which would be traversed by the proposed highway. Of course, no one can have a great deal of definite information about this subject, because the country has never been opened up. But the little that we have discovered gives great promise for this last Great West. My information comes from the Minister of Mines of British Columbia, the Honourable Mr. Asselstine, who is himself a practical mining man and familiar, as very few persons are, with northern British Columbia. Two or three routes have been proposed for the road. It think it is pretty well agreed that it would have to run through the interior of British Columbia; that it would be impracticable to have it skirt the coast line. Referring to the proposed eastern route, Mr. Asselstine says:

The eastern route follows the Rocky Mountain trench for a large part of its length. It would provide ready access to two areas in which very rich placer deposits have been worked—the Omineca-Manson creek and the Dease-McDame creek areas—as well as to promising prospective areas in the Liard-Frances-Pelly river section. Here again little lode prospecting has been carried on, but the region west of the route seems, from superficial examination, to be well mineralized. The geological formation is, for the most part, similar to the Cariboo district.

I am sure all honourable members know of the importance of the Cariboo district to British Columbia and Canada.

This route would provide access to the mica and beryl deposits now being worked near Fort Grahame, to the semi-anthracite coal deposits near Hudson Hope, estimated at seven billion tons, and to the silver-lead-zinc deposits of the Ingenika country. Several copper prospects

have been discovered in the Omineca district, while small deposits of placer tin and placer platinum occur in the Finlay and Pelly rivers.

I wish to repeat to honourable members that the available information on the district is only superficial, because there has so far been very little opportunity to carry on investigation. But what little is known is certainly most assuring. Here is what Mr. Asselstine's memorandum quotes with respect to agricultural prospects in the territory:

I have no hesitation in predicting a great future for the Finlay-Parnip valley. Between the mouth of the Ingenika on the north and the confluence of the Nation river with the Parnip on the south, I would conservatively estimate the good land at 500,000 acres. The Finlay valley varies from six to eight miles in breadth, the country being flat and the soil good right up to the mountain ranges paralleling the valley on both sides. The soil is black loam in the river bottoms and sandy or clay loam back of the first bench. Originally the valley was heavily timbered, spruce predominating. Large areas have, however, been burnt over and reforested with pine, poplar, willow, and some birch.

The main valley of the Nation lakes extends directly east and west for a distance of about 60 miles, and with its tributary areas comprises, roughly, 300,000 acres, 85 per cent of which is available for the various purposes of farming. To what agricultural purposes these soils may be best adapted would be determined as a result of more or less experiment in the future. On every hand is evidence that the loams are very fertile. A vigorous growth of grasses, shrubs, and weeds springs up where fire has opened the country and seed has found its way. Special mention must be made of the smaller wild fruits, which, where found, grow most luxuriantly and bear heavily.

As honourable members know, agriculture and mining often go hand in hand in the West. In the central and northern valleys of British Columbia no farming would be done if the produce had to be shipped to Edmonton, Calgary or Vancouver, but, as small mining communities spring up, there is an incentive to develop agricultural areas tributary to them. In the vast territory north of the Grand Trunk Pacific, mining would be facilitated and encouraged by the opening up of this highway, and farms would follow as a natural consequence.

With reference to the triangle with sides formed by the Manson Creek trail on the east, the parallel of 55° 30' on the north, and the line of Tatla, Middle river, Tremblay, and Stuart lake as hypotenuse, it is stated:

This undulating area, with an average elevation of 2,500 feet, contains about 400 sections of good agricultural land, as far as cruised; the balance of the flat country being jack-pine flats more or less gravelly, and crossed by gravel moraine ridges. The whole plateau country is well watered, there being a maze of small lakes and connecting streams. Meadows and willow bottoms are fairly numerous, but there is almost an entire absence of muskeg, the