

Peace River Railway Outlet

older settled districts because of adverse weather conditions and have settled in this new country. These people have left the southern districts because of dry weather or because their land was blown out and they have endeavoured to establish themselves in this new country. I ask the government and the house: In view of the courage these people have shown in going out to start over again, can we say to them that we cannot afford to build the necessary railway? I do not think we can afford to say that, and I do not think we ought to say that to these new settlers.

I was reading the February number of the *National Revenue Review* a few days ago and I noticed the following on page 18:

A Sense of Humour Left

A prairie farmer questioned by an income tax inspector regarding his income over a period of years, wrote as follows:—"You asked about my crops for the last five years; well I'll tell you. In 1924 I was dried out; in 1925 I was hailed out; in 1926 I was frozen out; in 1927 I was blown out, and in 1928 I just walked out and I'm still out."

There are many people in the Peace River country who went through similar experiences. They have settled in the park areas of the Peace River district in an effort to reestablish themselves, and I do not think that we should say to them that they must wait an indefinite time before they can get railway connection.

Many people will say that this will cost \$10,000,000 and we cannot afford it. I ask the government to decide definitely what the outlet will be and then build it as rapidly as we can afford. There are many settlers sixty and seventy miles from a railroad and they have done everything humanly possible to prevent their becoming a charge upon the dominion, the provincial or the municipal authorities. In spite of all their efforts some of them have been forced to take relief, and I submit that if we had a plan, if we could decide upon an outlet and go at it gradually, we could give these people such relief as would permit them to become definitely established in this new country.

There may have been difficulty in the years gone by in bringing about railway development in the new districts of the north owing to the fact that because of weather conditions the settlers might leave the southern districts of Alberta and Saskatchewan where railways and roads were already established and go into the north. But I think the period of intensive development in the southern areas of Saskatchewan and Alberta is past and in the future will be in the sections of those provinces that are most like Ontario and Quebec where there are many trees and

[Mr. D. M. Kennedy.]

enough shelter so that the rain when it comes will stay there and do good, rather than be drawn off by the wind; at least this will be the case until such time as tree planting can so advance on the southern areas of those provinces that we may have some protection against the wind. Because of that additional fact I submit that we can reasonably expect this development will be justified.

It may be rather difficult for hon. members who live in the older sections, and who can hardly travel twenty miles in any direction without crossing two or three railway tracks, to realize the position of settlers who have gone out into a new district sixty or seventy miles from a railway. It may be easy enough to pass the matter off by saying: "It is no concern of ours," but as a national duty the time has come when we ought definitely to deal with the situation.

Some of the settlers in Peace River and a number of boards of trade have been passing resolutions calling for a bonus on grain for export out of Peace River. Possibly the fact that I was anxious for the continuation of the bonus on wheat caused some of them to think this was a good thing to ask for until such time as the outlet was built. They are asking that Edmonton and Peace River be put on the grain export freight basis. There is a difference of about ten cents a hundred in the grain freight rate from some portions of Peace River, for instance, Dawson Creek in the constituency of the hon. member for Cariboo (Mr. Fraser), and a difference of about six cents in the central portion in my constituency. This would of course cost a few hundred thousand dollars a year, but I wish to bring to the attention of the government the fact that, pending the construction of the outlet, they are asking for this very thing. To-day the price of wheat in Peace River is twenty-four cents or less; it has been down below twenty cents. Before the adjournment last November I submitted to the house figures from government publications showing that on the best possible basis it cost about fifty cents to produce a bushel of wheat. Yet the farmers in Peace River are to-day getting about twenty to twenty-five cents a bushel even for No. 1 northern—and it is not all No. 1 northern, although I am pleased to say that a great proportion of it is. Even if Peace River were to be put on the same basis as Edmonton, this would not meet the situation in the newer districts. Therefore I want to bring the matter to the attention of the government again and to urge action with all the earnestness of which I am capable. I am not asking them to launch out on a huge program of