

was a prairie country down there, table land with only small areas of bottom land. The table land decreases in height as you go north. As you get down the Vermilion you get the prairie again. At Vermilion the country is not so much subject to frost as in the higher land. They have grown wheat there a great number of years. In the valley of the river the low land on each side is fertile. There is no great quantity of it on either bank. There is just these flats. Taking the aggregate it is a large quantity because it is a tremendously long river. The valley is probably a mile wide on both sides of the river. The wheat had been frozen in August even at Vermilion, but they always grow some wheat there.

Hon. Mr. Power, at this point, asked: 'As you are getting nearer the Rocky mountains you are less liable to get frost?'

Mr. McConnell replied: 'I do not know. It has not been tested very much. They have grown things at Fort St. John. Getting west you are also getting higher. There is a grist mill at Vermilion and a large quantity of wheat is sent there. The wheat is all grown round there. That country is too good a country to be wasted. The valleys are protected from the wind, and the theory is that it is less liable to frost on account of the wind being kept away. There is a magnificent growth of grass in the plateau, and there is hay in the marshes. It is very much the same country as around Edmonton. It is a good place for raising cattle, but they probably would have to feed them in the winter time, the same as they do at Edmonton. Sheep ought to do well. They appeared to have a fair rainfall. Witness thought that as far as the country is concerned it is very much the same as Edmonton. The country is well watered.'

Mr. McConnell concluded that a farmer might succeed there even if he could not grow wheat, if he could get a market. That is the only thing. They grow vegetables right on the Arctic circle, potatoes and things of that kind. Potatoes grow to a fair size at Fort Good Hope. With regard to the soil on the plateau, there is a covering of black mould, and the clay below that, a clay subsoil. They have the Saskatoon berries up there, strawberries, raspberries and red currants, and blue berries. Mr. McConnell thought the spring was earlier, if anything, than at Edmonton. He did not know exactly when it closed up in the fall. He did not think there is much difference between the fall there and at Edmonton. The season is just about the same. It is further west than Edmonton. The soil is also very much the same, and the conditions generally are the same, except that it is a high plateau.

CHANGES IN CLIMATE.

The chairman (the Honourable Mr. Davis) here interjected the remark that when he went to live at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, there was frost every month in the year. Now they do not know what early and late frosts are; they never cause trouble.

Mr. McCONNELL.—'You cannot predict about a country in that way. We have the soil up there; that is one thing. I think when the country is all broken up and cultivated it will make a difference. The rays of the sun will get into the ground. The country up there is improving.'

As to the extent of lands suitable for cultivating in the Peace river country, Mr. McConnell said he would not call all the country coloured pink on the maps agricultural land. He knows it is not, but there are aspen ridges all through that country which may be good, but they are separated by muskegs everywhere, except on the table prairie. You have these muskegs with solid ground in between them, and in those places aspens grow, and where you find those poplars the land is nearly always good. But the poplars do not grow to any size. The aspen is not on the prairie; it is on the wooded country, in between the muskegs.

Besides there are occasional patches of prairie at Vermilion, following the Peace river down and also the Grand Prairie.

There is no large continuous prairie once you get thirty miles from Edmonton. You go out of the prairie country. Then you simply get occasional patches of prairie.