one, on Lake Nipissing. We already own the foreshore, and have made all preparations, and construction should be started. The Canadian National Railway system would then have a haul of 331 miles to Montreal, practically all down-grade. The Government railway can under present circumstances draw a larger load from North Bay to Montreal than any other railway. In addition to that, the Canadian National railways have to get coal from some place, and at present they are getting it from Fort Erie or Buffalo by an all-rail haul; at least the great bulk of it comes that way. Would it not be a good business proposition for these roads to have their coal at a cost of $2.25 to $2.50 less per ton. I am quite satisfied this waterway would benefit the railways as much as anybody else.

The hon. member for Port Arthur touched very lightly upon the matter of iron ore. We have in that North country millions of tons of iron ore. These deposits have been diamond drilled for many hundreds of feet, but at the present time it is almost impossible to put the ore on the market on account of the transportation cost. If by a system of waterways we could get that ore to the smelters along the Great Lakes we would develop in Canada an industry which at the present time deserves encouragement probably more than any other industry in this country.

I shall not take up the time of the House further. I just put this proposition: We should not make any useless expenditure, of course, but I think any manufacturer who could see a way of cutting down his overhead charges and of greatly increasing the production of cheaper goods, would be very foolish if he did not make the initial expenditure necessary for that purpose.

Motion declared negatived.

BANK MERGERS IN CANADA.

Hon. RODOLPHE LEMIEUX (Maisonneuve) moved:

For a return giving a detailed statement of the number of bank mergers in Canada since October 1, 1911, up to date, together with a copy of all petitions and correspondence opposing same. Also, the names of banks affected thereby.

He said: Mr. Speaker, when I gave notice of this motion at the opening of the session I was under the excitement created by the merger of the Bank of Ottawa with the Bank of Nova Scotia. As you will remember, the announcement of this merger caused considerable emotion in and around Ottawa.

The Bank of Ottawa was a well known institution, on a sound basis, and doing an excellent business.

The very name of the bank carried considerable weight with it. The men associated with the bank also carried great weight. The people protested vehemently against that merger here in the city of Ottawa. I remember more especially a remark of one of the leading merchants on Sparks street on the morrow of the announcement that the merger would take place. On being interviewed by one of the reporters of the Daily Citizen, this merchant said: "You have no idea of the feeling I had this morning when I read that the old Bank of Ottawa would pass away. It is as if I had lost an old friend." Of course, that is only sentimental, and banks and ministers of finance do not concern themselves too much with sentiment alone.

But, there is another side to this question. There has been throughout the country, especially in the West, and pretty generally in the rural sections of Canada, a strong opposition to the mergers which have taken place of late. During the fifteen years when the late Sir Wilfrid Laurier was Prime Minister, I do not remember that more than one or two bank mergers took place. I know that there was at that time a strong public opinion against such mergers. But of late my hon. friend the Minister of Finance (Sir Thomas White) seems to have been over-generous, over-chivalrous, with the big financial institutions.

I am not well enough versed in the financial and banking affairs of the country to offer any severe criticism. I am simply re-echoing on the floor of the House the protests which have been made throughout the country against that policy. My only reason for bringing this matter to the attention of the House is to learn from my hon. friend if the policy of the Government is to favour more bank mergers. We are now reduced to a small number of banks, nineteen in all. In this country, with a sparse population scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific, is it the policy of the Government to further reduce the number of our banking institutions? On the contrary should not the Government favour a large number of banking institutions which would distribute to the farmers and workingmen the credit required for the business of the country?

My hon. friend the Minister of Finance will understand that I do not unduly criticise him. I am simply repeating what I read in the press and what I heard as re-