

*Peace River Outlet—Mr. Kennedy*

engineers for the construction of an outlet there would be over 6,000 acres of economic land per mile of line in the Peace River country, as compared with an average of 5,000 acres in the other prairie provinces. Undoubtedly that is one reason why we had such favourable results in railway operation in the Peace River during the years that I have mentioned. Our yields per acre have been running from four to six bushels higher than the average in the prairie provinces. If the three prairie provinces were worth railroading, it seems to me that with the higher yields per acre in the Peace River and with about twenty per cent greater acreage per mile of line, we have a pretty good case for the economics of the proposal. I know the railways have taken the position that there ought to be enough traffic in sight to justify the expenditure right from the start. I do not think there is any possibility that we can meet such a condition. If that is the basis on which the railway is to be built, then I do not think we are likely to have the proposed outlet for a good many years to come. But how many of our railways would have been built, and how much development would we have had in western Canada, if some twenty, thirty or forty years ago that condition had been laid down?

Having demonstrated the fertility of the soil, and the investigation having established the fact that there is sufficient arable land to justify the railway mileage, it seems to me that we have made out a good case for the construction of the outlet. I know the argument will be advanced that these are hard times. Well, the curves of hard times and good times in Canada have been followed up and down very largely by extensive programs of public works and railway construction. If one cares to look at the record of railway mileage built since 1901 it is quite plain that in the good years we have constructed a greater railway mileage. But, after all, is there not a fairly good case for spreading out the construction of public works and railways? I do not know whether it is safe to argue that the construction of these public works and railways was a cause or an effect of the prosperity that we enjoyed. I think it is partly one and partly the other. But I feel quite sure that by closing down on railway construction and reducing our expenditure on public works to the minimum we are contributing to the continuance of the depression, and I think it is fair to ask that the government take the initiative in trying to break the depression. Various proposals have been made to this end. Some of those proposals have been waived aside, but undoubtedly here

[Mr. D. M. Kennedy.]

is a project, that must be built, if promises made in past elections are to be fulfilled—and I think they will be some time. The route has been surveyed, the proposed undertaking has been thoroughly investigated, and I think it is pretty well known where the outlet is going to be. Surely it is a sound policy to view the proposition over a five or ten year period and say we ought to take it in hand now. Undoubtedly if we undertake it at the present time it would help a very large number of people to establish themselves who otherwise would be dependent on straight relief. I think in the Willison report, prepared for the province of Ontario away back in 1913, it was said that governments ought to look ahead and plan public works for the future. Well, here is one of the best-planned public works we have ever had in the dominion. I think the Minister of Railways himself believes in a plan, because he mentioned a five-year plan for the national railways within which time they would get back on their feet and become self-supporting. I think we know exactly where the outlet ought to be, we know pretty well how much it will cost, and I think we know also that it is going to be built in the near future anyway. Undoubtedly its construction will contribute to the welfare of the people in the Peace River country, some of whom, as I have already said, will otherwise have to depend on direct relief; and as its construction will help towards breaking the depression it will be in the interests of the whole dominion to proceed with the project in the near future.

Hon. R. J. MANION (Minister of Railways and Canals): I should like, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate my hon. friend from Peace River (Mr. Kennedy) on the moderate and fair tone of his speech, and on his persistence—rightly so from his standpoint—in advocating the construction of this outlet for the Peace River country. The hon. gentleman has been a consistent supporter of the proposal during the regime of the late government as well as during the time that the present administration has been in office. I have no exception to take to any of his statements but one, in which he contrasted the larger area of 25,000,000 acres with the smaller area which at an earlier stage was thoroughly investigated by the Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific railways. I have been advised, and I think correctly, that the larger area of which he speaks, while without doubt containing very promising agricultural land, has not been surveyed to anything like the same extent as was the smaller area upon which the report