

CONTINUATION OF THE EVIDENCE OF J. B. TYRRELL, GIVEN BEFORE
THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON MARCH 2, 1907.

Mr. Tyrrell's examination as to the geographical features and resources of the region north of the Saskatchewan watershed having been completed, was questioned specially as to Hudson bay and the adjacent country and as to the practicability of maintaining a route of communication via Hudson bay and strait.

Mr. Tyrrell said as he had tramped all round it, he was familiar with the country about the bay. Asked as to the proposed route of the railway from Lake Winnipeg to Churchill, he explained that west of the lake for a considerable distance there is a great swamp along the Saskatchewan river, but north of the lake you get into a limestone country that has very little soil on it for probably 40 or 50 miles down, till you get to the Grass river. The limestone is fair building stone, similar to the stone at the Stoney mountains and Sulphur mines. Witness did not think that the swamp on the Saskatchewan could be improved. He thinks the grade on the Saskatchewan is rather too low, unless the engineers went down as far as Grand Rapids and worked back from there.

Continuing to describe the route of the railway to Fort Churchill, Mr. Tyrrell remarked that after getting across the limestone country, which has very little soil on it, you get north to the valley of the Grass river, and then you get down to the clay country. Then you go, from where you reach the Grass river down to its mouth in Split lake, over a gentle rolling clay-covered country. None of the hills are probably over 100 feet high. It is just a gentle, rolling country with not very deep valleys. It would be very easy to build a railroad over. From Split lake northward, the railway route as it is marked on the map, runs round by the Fishing lakes. There is a fairly good country along the valley of the Nelson river, till you get north to the Fishing lakes. It is a good agricultural country and an easy country to build a railroad in. Then there is a country that is stony and hilly, covered with jackpine, a sandy, stony country for a distance, it might be of 25 to 50 miles or so. After descending from that you get down to a level or a gently sloping apparently level plain, which is one vast swamp, the only dry places being along the banks of the streams. That plain extends down to the shore of Hudson bay, and a railroad can readily be built on it, as long as it keeps to the dry drained portion close to the banks of the main streams.

SHORES OF HUDSON BAY.

This would bring the line down to Churchill or the Little Churchill, or to the Deer river or any of the little streams that run across that plain. The streams here, as a rule, are cut down 20 to 30 feet. This is very extensive. He would say it is quite impracticable, except with very great difficulty and great expense, to travel across this country in summer away from the streams. He walked across it in winter. This swamp goes right down to the shore of Hudson bay. The country is of the same character all round from Churchill down to Hudson bay. The western side of the swamp land is about 100 miles west of Hudson bay. It only goes north to the woods—within the forest area. North of the tree limit there is no swamp. The mossy swamp does not grow beyond the forest line.

The shore of Hudson bay is very low generally. In many places on the shores of Hudson bay, where the tide only rises eight or nine feet, it runs out ten miles. Mr. Tyrrell said he had been on the edge of that flat country, and at low tide he could not see the water at all; it was so far out.