

# The West and the Hudson's Bay Railway

By E. A. PARTRIDGE

After waiting for twenty-five years for one or other of the parties in the federal parliament to build a road to Hudson's Bay, we find that we have arrived as near to our goal as the following significant words from Premier Laurier would imply.

"I stated that whilst, personally, I was open to considering the building of the road by the government, I was strongly disinclined to government operating it."

Some of us have been laboring under the hallucination that the Liberal government had promised to build the Railway, but now it appears that the situation is simply that the premier is open to considering the building of the road by government.

This looks very much like progression backwards, and should certainly be a warning to those who have anything to lose by delay in the opening up of this avenue for the exportation of the natural products from the West, and the importation of manufactured goods from Great Britain and the continent.

It seemed little short of criminal for the population of the West to rely any longer upon a parliament composed mainly of Eastern representatives to take the initiative in respect to the building of and the operation of the Hudson's Bay railway. Surely no one can any longer hesitate about taking steps to organize a popular joint stock company of Westerners from the fear that it might prejudice our chances for having the road built and operated by the federal authorities in the best interests of the West. The fact that the government propose building the road from the land end instead of from the Bay end is not reassuring to any thoughtful Westerner. Why transport rails and other materials over thousands of miles of railway when they can be carried there by sea at a quarter of the cost? Neither is the land grant of 12800 acres per mile to the C.N.R. for the 95 miles ending at the Pas, which by the way was so poorly built that a government engineer travelling over it on a hand car expressed fear of being derailed.

I have lately received a letter which contains the following:—"I have just read your article 'A People's Road to Hudson's Bay' in THE GRAIN GROWERS' GUIDE," and am in agreement with you that if the farmers' efforts to obtain public ownership and operation of the road are thwarted by the government it will be up to us to take the matter in our own hands.

"With this end in view and whilst the question is 'red hot' may I suggest to you the advisability of holding public meetings at several of the most important centres in the province, and laying out our scheme in detail, and then and there eliciting subscriptions for the organization of a company to obtain a charter in the event of the government failing us.

"This is a case of 'prevention is better than cure,' for if the government do not accede to our requests and feel inclined to hand the working of the line over to a railroad corporation it may prevent them long so if they know that the people of the West are prepared and determined to handle the proposition themselves.

## Navigation of the Bay

"If you can produce the evidence you refer to that the Bay is navigable twelve months in the year, it would certainly be an 'eye opener,' and go towards reducing greater confidence in the undertaking."

Relative to the concluding paragraph of the quotation, I offer the following:—While in Calgary last week I came in contact with a Mr. Tracey, whose grand uncle, John Tracey, sailed from Havre one November, 80 years ago, for Hudson's Bay, landed at Churchill about the middle of January, loaded his vessel with furs, and returned to Havre. Mr. Tracey has seen the log book which contains the account of this voyage. There is nothing in the manner of the recounting the incidents of the trip to indicate that the captain thought he was doing anything unusual in making this mid-winter voyage, and from the port of Churchill. Mr. Tracey has promised to secure me the log book which is in the possession of a member of the family who resides in Washington, D. C.

It has been generally supposed that the ports on Hudson's Bay are closed from early in November till the end of the following May or beginning of June. The department of railways and canals publishes a "Report of the Hudson's Bay Railway Surveys" which effectually explodes this theory. This report may be referred to as Sessional Paper No. 203, A. 1910. Under the heading of "Nelson," sub-heading "Defence," we find the following:—"It might be mentioned here in passing the greatly increased difficulty that a hostile fleet would have in blockading the Atlantic Coast of Canada were the Hudson's Bay route opened. The fact that ships may enter and leave Port Nelson all the year round is a fact well worth remembering when the possibilities of war are considered."

It appears on examination of the chart issued in connection with this report, that there is a strip of water considerably over half a mile wide which never freezes, and which extends from the mouth of the river Nelson to a point about nine miles up stream. Outside of this, there is a considerable area the ice on which does not equal a foot in thickness at any time of the year. This strip of open water has a minimum depth of 25 feet at low tide, and near the upper end is so sheltered as to constitute a safe harborage. There is a strong current which keeps this channel clear both from the floating ice on the surface and sand deposits below.

There is a splendid grade to be obtained by railway approaching to Port Nelson

the coast is porous at all seasons. Hudson's Bay is less subject to storms than the Great Lakes. From what I have observed of the movement of ice in Hudson's Bay during the year, I am perfectly assured that an ordinary iron-screw steamer would never have any difficulty in getting through or round that which is largely met with in the Bay or Straits. The chief reason why old sailing vessels of the Hudson's Bay Co., often met with detention in the ice, was, and is, that at the season when there is pack ice there is generally very little wind, and sailing vessels are consequently as helpless amongst the ice as they would be in a dead calm in the centre of the Atlantic or elsewhere."

Mr. C. S. Drummond, a financial agent, and a man who was connected with the early project of the building of the Hudson's Bay railway, gave the following evidence:—"I am interested in the carrying out of the Hudson's Bay Railway scheme, and during the time I was in England in January last, I conversed with many persons in Liverpool and London, as to the project. I also met in London some gentlemen from Berlin, and conversed with them. The opinion of all with whom I conversed was that the Straits and Bay were navigable for powerful steamers the whole year round, except perhaps during the period from the 15th May to the 15th July, and even then they supposed navigation to be difficult, but not impossible. There is a strong syndicate formed in Liverpool in which

them to secure a charter and assistance from the Dominion government or not, it will have the result, at least, of stirring up those who, while not wanting to build it themselves, so long as no one else is likely to build it, would move Heaven and Earth to get ahead of a company composed of persons whose object would be to provide an avenue of escape from the extortionate rates, and rotten service of the great trans-continental lines.

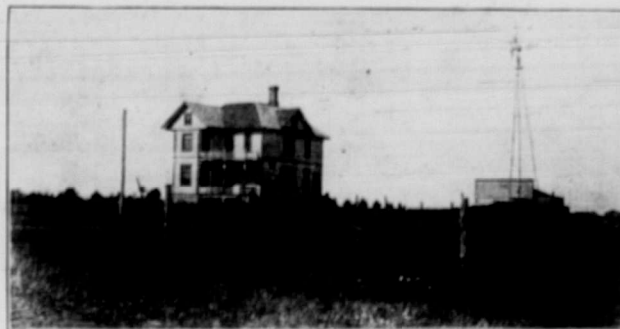
Given the command of a reasonable amount of money, the committee will, if thought necessary, demonstrate the navigability of the Bay and Straits by sending a vessel through these waters this winter. The writer is so assured of their navigability that he would gladly welcome the opportunity to take passage in this vessel, if the support to the subscription fund be generous enough to provide it and the lack of faith widespread enough to require such complete demonstration.

People of the West! this problem has too great a bearing upon your prosperity to be allowed to be dealt with by hostile or by unsympathetic minds. Already the great leverage which the existing trans-continental lines have in urging that they be permitted to operate this road or that the government provide the road-bed without equipment and allow the existing railways running rights over it, is the contention that the route will only be available for full traffic during two months, partial traffic for three months, and practically no business for the rest of the year.

Let us not allow the cursed apathy which has so often betrayed the people into the hands of politicians and exploiters, at this time hold us in quiescence until this last avenue of escape from commercial scheming and corporate greed be closed to us forever.

## THE INCOME TAX

Editor Guide:—I should like to say a few words in reference to Claude Saunders' letter of the 18th of January, in defence of the tariff. I consider this problem of the tariff in this way: free trade and direct taxation, or a tariff system and indirect taxation. In a free trade country a man knows just how much he pays towards the revenue of his country, but it is quite impossible to know how much he is paying to the revenue of the country by a tariff system and how much he is paying to the protected manufacturers, over and above a legitimate profit. Now, as one born and spending the early part of my life in Britain, I must take exception to the statement on the income tax. "Anyone who has lived in England knows the grind of the income tax, that is if their income is just large enough to be taxed, viz: £800 or over." I have no hesitation in saying that it is the opinion of the British nation today that there is no more just tax in existence in any country in the world. Just let me here state what that tax is. In Britain today £160, or roughly \$800, is considered a good living income. Through protection partly, it would take at least \$1200 a year to bring an income to the same value in this country as \$800 in England. On incomes over £160 a tax of 9d. on the £ receives an abatement in respect of each child so that a man with an income of £200 a year and four children is exempt from income tax altogether. If a person's income exceeds £2000 he has to pay a tax of 1 shilling in the £, while if it exceeds £5000 he has to pay a super-tax of 6d. in the £ on the amount by which it exceeds £2000. e.g. If a man has an income tax of £6000 a year he pays 1s. in the £ for the first £2000 but he has to pay 1s. 6d. for the other £4000. Now all this refers to earned income or income gained from actual labor. If a person has an income from investments wherein he does nothing but invest his capital he has an extra 2d. in the £ to pay of income tax, and if his income is under £2000 his income tax is 11d. in the £. While if it exceeds £5000 a year the tax would be 1½d. on the first £2000, then 1d. on the balance. I think that a careful study of this will show the justice of it. I admit what Mr. Saunders said regarding the language used against our adversaries. It only stirs up a strife when what is wanted is a quite sensible



Farm Home of Robert Dunbar, North Portal, Sask.

from the South West; in fact, a better grade than any of the trans-continental railways possess.

## No Ice-Locked Ports

With the bogey of ice-locked ports laid at rest, the only thing which has to be disposed of is the navigability of Hudson's Straits. There is a report known as the "Report of the Select Committee" the members of which were appointed by the legislature of the province of Manitoba in the year 1884. This committee took the evidence of a great many men who were in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company for many years, and of others who had a personal knowledge of this matter, and whose evidence can be fully relied upon.

Captain James Hackland, one of the witnesses, who was employed by the Hudson's Bay Co. for 39 years says:—"The Straits are open all the year round, and never freeze. There is no reason why steamships should not navigate the Straits at any time of the year. The navigation of Hudson's Bay and Straits is not dangerous. There are no shoals, and there are few fogs. During 16 years of navigation of Hudson's Bay was never impeded by the fogs." Walter Dixon, 20 years employed in the Hudson's Bay Co. says:—"I have reason to believe that the Hudson's Straits and a great body of the Bay proper, are navigable at all seasons of the year, and afford no practical difficulty to ordinary navigation. Icebergs properly so called, are not formed in the Hudson's Bay and Straits nor can they get there as far as I am aware. The nature of the ice in Hudson's Bay is shore ice generally from 2½ feet to 3 feet thick, and in many places along

are some of the largest steamship companies, who are willing to furnish vessels for opening up the ocean route between the ports on Hudson's Bay and Liverpool, on the assurance to them that a railway will be built. They have gone into the matter very thoroughly, having had at their command the latest charts, log books, and information respecting the navigation of the Northern seas, and have also obtained information from the "Department des Cartes de la Marine et Colonies." The very fact of this syndicate being prepared to enter into this scheme at their own risk, after having obtained such full information, proves the practicability of the route." In a book issued by the minister of the interior entitled "Canadian Fertile Northland," Dr. Bell is quoted as saying:—"Neither the Bay nor Straits are frozen up any more than the Atlantic Ocean."

## H. B. Company Methods

The Hudson's Bay Co. were able to fool the world as to the suitability for settlement of the territory which now contains the "Granary of the British Empire." In the same way they have been and are hoodwinking our people as to the navigability of the Hudson's Bay route. In this they are nobly assisted by the residents of Eastern Canada whose business investments and prospects would be endangered by a diversion of trade from the St. Lawrence trans-continental route.

A small sum has been requested from everybody whose property or general prosperity will be enhanced by the development of the Hudson's Bay route. Whether the placing of such a sum at the hands of the committee will enable

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