

EVIDENCE OF MR. RICHARD GEORGE McCONNELL, GEOLOGIST IN
THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY DEPARTMENT, HEARD BEFORE THE
SELECT COMMITTEE FEBRUARY 18, 1907.

Mr. McConnell stated that he had been in the Geological Survey Department since 1879. He had traversed all over the country from British Columbia to Moosejaw, had been down the Mackenzie and across to the Alaska boundary. He had been all over that western district, but had not been east of the Mackenzie at all. He had been through the country traversed by the Liard river and the Porcupine, and had been up the Yukon, the MacMillan, the Stewart and a number of those rivers.

His exploratory work had been mostly along the streams. He had, however, been over quite a bit of the table land. He had nearly always gone back from the river quite a bit, 20 or 30 and 40 miles in places. From Lesser Slave lake he started on foot with a couple of men packing, and went through all the country between Lesser Slave lake and Big Knife lake, a distance of about 150 miles. Then he went from Fort Providence to Fort Rae, about 150 miles, covering a stretch of country from east to west of about 300 miles. That was in the month of January, and the snow was about three feet deep. He had never been as far east as the Hudson bay basin. His mission was specially to look for minerals, but of course he was supposed to keep his eyes open for anything. Most of the information he could give is to be found in his reports to the department. He reported every year.

The Mackenzie river averages about a mile wide—the finest river in the world. He thought the lower St. Lawrence carried more water in the spring, but in the summer the Mackenzie probably carries about as much. It is a great volume of water. He worked it out at about half a million feet a second. The river extends about one thousand miles from Great Slave lake to the sea. It is navigable all the way, and a boat runs from the rapids on the Slave river down to the head of the delta. There is no trouble with sand bars, but there are occasional islands in the river.

AGRICULTURE.

With regard to the Peace river valley, the value of that country as far as wheat growing is concerned is entirely problematical. If you go there in June or July you will come to the conclusion that it is the finest country in the whole wide world, but witness had been there twice in August and found a heavy frost on each occasion. Things changed very rapidly about the end of August. He did not know if there would be frost about the same time around Edmonton, but the two years he happened to be in that district there would be about fifteen degrees of frost at night. That is in that cattle country, which is considerably higher than the surface of the Peace river. There were no crops at that time. The soil in that district is splendid. It is precisely the same as the country around Edmonton. It is just as good a country if not better. It might be good for the growing of hay or in fact anything. There is no question that the soil is good, and in June and July it is a most delicious looking country. He went up the Wolverine and several of these rivers, and he could not say that all that country coloured pink on the map in the committee room was agricultural land.

In the Peace river country he went down the Loon river, and found much of the country in there partly muskeg; in fact the greater part of it is muskeg; but there are patches of country covered with aspen, which is probably good for agriculture. He went all the way down the Loon river and the Red river flowing into the Peace river, and another unnamed stream, and found it