

*Peace River Railway Outlet*

business development of that part of the province.

The steel could have been put on this road a year or two ago very cheaply. There was relief camp after relief camp in the northern part of that country where men were sent to cut highways when in my estimation they would have been a great deal better employed had they been captained by two or three experts to lay the steel on the road. The steel could have been procured cheaply and that sixty-nine miles of road could have been completed. Instead of that they were sent to do highway work which in a year or two will be useless, because the second growth of timber will render the work that they have done of no effect.

The Minister of Railways, in my opinion, should give the house a statement with respect to his policy on this road. He has stated a do nothing policy regarding the Peace River outlet and I understand there is not to be a dollar this year of capital expenditure on Canadian National railway construction in northwestern Saskatchewan. This means that if the Minister of Railways does not find the money the road cannot be built, consequently there is no use "passing the buck" to the Canadian National. We might as well know now where we stand. I should like to know, before this session concludes, from the minister just what the attitude of the government and of his department is, and whether they intend to provide money for laying the steel on this road, which otherwise will very soon deteriorate and become absolutely useless. I am satisfied that a statement one way or the other would clear the air, and the people of that northern area would know exactly where they stand in this matter. What has the Minister of Railways to say about it?

Mr. A. E. MUNN (Vancouver North): I wish to say just a few words in support of the resolution. For many years I have been advocating a Pacific outlet from the Peace River country. At the special session of 1930 I suggested that a good deal of work could be done in the form of relief, and the same situation exists at the present time. In British Columbia alone there are several hundred men in camps on relief doing practically nothing, and there are, I am told, also men in this condition in the Peace River country and in Alberta. I do not suggest that the government should spend a great deal of money in the way of capital expenditure, but these men have to be taken care of and I do not see any reason why they could not be put to work in the way I propose. The average man would rather do a little work than

[Mr. McIntosh.]

sit around doing nothing and taking the dole. I leave that suggestion with the government.

The people in that country must have an outlet some day or other, and they have been promised it. The late Liberal government as well as the present Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett) promised this outlet, and there are good reasons why the road has not been built. I suggest, however, that the government should take into consideration these hundreds of idle men who might be working on the road at no additional expense. The government must take care of them in any event, and I leave this practical suggestion with the government. A good deal of work which must be done some day could now be gone on with.

Mr. D. M. KENNEDY (Peace River): Usually we have been promised consideration of this question when it has come up, but on this occasion, if I understood the minister's words rightly, we are to receive no consideration.

Mr. MANION: I said that the matter would be considered when conditions changed and finances would permit it.

Mr. KENNEDY (Peace River): Well, possibly that is better, but I think that we shall have to undertake to change conditions; that is the point. I do not believe that the engineers are at all right when they say that the work will be proceeded with when it is practicable. I venture to say that no engineer has ever made a report that was not known beforehand to be acceptable to the government and to the two railways. I submit that the engineers have never in the last ten years taken a stand on this question which has been justified by subsequent events; not one that I know of. They have been right in certain details but they have never been right in a large way.

I know of no reason why the Peace River country should have to wait until there is a guarantee that from the outset this railway will be a profitable venture. No railways have been built in Canada on that basis. Under the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, I cannot see my way to withdraw the motion. If the government wants to bury it, let them bury it right, and let the Peace River people know it. But if you want to go ahead and do anything, then the time is ripe for action.

Mr. BENNETT: The hon. gentleman will observe that the resolution does not fix any time.