

order that the matter might be looked into from a practical standpoint, with a view to determining chiefly what the best port was, and with a view to ascertaining the merits of the contract in every way. That done the contract was gone on with. That done the covenant of the Conservative party was implemented, and that mileage, and as well a further considerable mileage, was constructed, I think, totaling 332 miles. As well the grade was laid for the balance, or for almost all the balance; I believe I am right in saying that the entire balance of mileage was constructed, as far as the laying down and the grade was concerned.

Then the war came, and by unanimous consent—for I do not think there was any objection; I believe western Canada knowing, or believing, at least, that it was serious for that part of the country, quite acquiesced—it was determined that the project could not be gone on with at all during the continuance of the struggle. The war lasted until the close of 1918. But the burden of the conflict was heavier financially when the war was over than during its continuance. The burdens incident to taking care of the returned men, and all the other problems that followed in the wake of the war, made it impossible to pursue the project further for some time.

During the period that succeeded the war, pressure was brought to bear upon the government of that time to devote moneys to the construction of the road. The government did not see its way to accede to such pressure. Parenthetically let me say that the determination of the building or the taking up of rails and all else is a matter for this government and this parliament. It is a matter solely for our decision; it is not a matter for the decision of the directors of the National Railways at all. It has been a government project from the beginning, it is a capital undertaking, consequently it is an undertaking for which this government and this parliament are responsible, and in respect of which neither can shelter itself behind the Board of Directors of the National Railways.

I said that the late government did not feel that it could justify acceding to the pressure to continue the building of the road during its term of office. We were subjected to considerable abuse for taking that course. The then member for Nelson (Mr. J. A. Campbell), I recall was most insistent—and not only most insistent but I am sure hon. members who have spoken in a totally different vein in this debate will agree most unreasonable—in his attitude toward the late administration on this subject. During those years, because of the fact that we had to rehabilitate

the Canadian National system, we had to overtake years and years of deferred betterments and years and years of deferred equipment, we had to build branch lines without the completion of which almost indescribable hardship would have existed—during those periods when money by the hundreds of millions had to be applied to make our railway system that we now own the system that it is to-day, a system that we are proud of, pressure was determined and unrelenting upon the late government, at the same time, to complete the Hudson Bay railway. The situation is rather different to-day. I am not saying that even yet the time has come—I observe this resolution does not say that even yet the time has come—when the capital moneys necessary to immediately complete this railway, should be provided. The situation is however wholly different to what it was some three years ago. Now the moneys that are necessary for our Canadian National Railways—because of the position they have been brought to, because of the patronage they are receiving on account of the service they are able to give—those moneys are much less—less by scores of millions than they were in those other times; and now this House is evidently of the opinion, if this resolution is to express its view, that the time is even not yet at hand when further capital should be expended on extending this route.

I have given a history of the subject up to the present time. We find ourselves now within about eighty miles of the completion of the laying down of the rails to Port Nelson. We find ourselves fairly well agreed that the right port has been selected as the terminus at Hudson bay. Very much doubt existed as to that, but I fancy from the tone of this debate, that it is generally conceded that Nelson is the correct port. We find, as well, that even though the money necessary—some four or five millions—to finish the construction and complete the terminals at Hudson bay has been expended, even after that is done, to put the harbour in shape as originally contemplated will take some nine millions more. That totals about fourteen or fifteen million dollars, and in addition the building of a terminal elevator will be essential in order to provide facilities for the export of wheat. These are not small figures; they are large.

And here let me make this observation: It would seem to me, and it has seemed to me for some time, that it ought to be possible with completion of the railway mileage to provide—perhaps not on the scale originally contemplated but on some less pretentious