

Peace River—Railway Outlet

session of parliament. First, let me say something about agriculture. The Peace River and the Peace River block, which is that section of the Peace River within the boundaries of British Columbia, as well as other parts of the Cariboo contain a vast extent of the finest agricultural land in the world. I may say that the agricultural production is extensive enough to warrant the building of this railroad and to guarantee sufficient revenue to make it pay. I believe that the late Sir Henry Thornton is on record as promising to build this line when the Peace River district was able to export 10,000,000 bushels of wheat a year. That 10,000,000 bushels is now away above 20,000,000, and it is not mere idle talk to say that the present production could easily be doubled in the near future were farmers encouraged to the extent of being provided with proper transportation facilities.

Then I want to say a word about ranching in the Cariboo riding. Out in the Chilcotin we have some of the greatest ranching on the North American continent. I believe these ranches have almost reached the limit of their producing capacity unless they can secure supplies of fairly cheap cattle feed from the prairies. If they can receive such shipments on a reasonable basis they could raise more and better cattle than they are now producing.

As a matter of fact the people of British Columbia require for their own use a great deal of agricultural products which could be supplied from the Peace River and the Peace River block. From 1940 to 1943 British Columbia imported \$100,000,000 worth of farm products. The Peace River could have supplied probably all of what British Columbia required. It is quite possible that a large portion of that \$100,000,000 worth came from the Peace River country, but hon. members may be surprised to learn that before British Columbia can use the products of its own province they have to be exported into another province and then redirected to Vancouver. Some farmers in the Peace River block have to haul their products from one hundred to two hundred miles before they reach a rail-head, and then they have to ship them four hundred miles to Edmonton, so that such produce travels from eight to twelve hundred miles and still will be no nearer to Vancouver than they were at the point of shipment. The result is that it costs about seventeen cents to ship a bushel of wheat from the Peace River district to Vancouver, whereas if this line were built the wheat could be laid down in Vancouver at eight cents a bushel.

Farmers have to haul their feed grain from far distant points to the railway at Dawson

[Mr. Irvine.]

Creek or to some other point along the line and then send it to Vancouver, where it is transhipped and reloaded on the Pacific Great Eastern and hauled another three hundred to four hundred miles to Williams Lake and then reshipped another hundred and seventy-five miles in to the Chilcotin in order to bring feed to the ranchers in that area, whereas if it were shipped by means of the railway I suggest directly from the Peace River block to the Cariboo, it would be a very short haul indeed and a downhill run all the way, and there would be no difficulty in the ranchers there purchasing what they require to augment their feed supplies.

This Cariboo country is also rich in furs and rich in timber, not only timber which is manufactured into lumber but timbers which may be used for producing newsprint, wall-board and building paper. There are also numerous stands of timber which could very well be used in the plastic industries. We have been given to understand that there are great possibilities in the future for the plastic industry, and there is an abundance of the resources required in such an industry in northern British Columbia.

Next I want to spend a moment or two on the mineral resources. I shall not spend much time on gold because I imagine most people know that there are fine gold mines in the Cariboo riding in full production. Nor shall I spend much time on some of the other minerals which seem to be more attractive from the point of view of moneymaking. I would rather mention the great coal deposit at Hudson Hope. There is nothing on this continent to compare in extent and quality, with the possible exception of the coal deposit in west Virginia, with that great coal deposit at Hudson Hope. The brochure which was prepared by the government of British Columbia points out that this coal is superior to Pennsylvania coal. Much of this coal could be shipped direct to our ports on the Pacific coast if we had the means of transportation, and it could be used not only in our locomotives but in our shipping and in our furnaces. At the present time British Columbia has to import a good deal of the coal used for these purposes. The development of our coal resources in this area would very probably lead to the establishment of secondary industries of great value. I was reading a speech made by Mr. J. Corsbie, M.L.A. in the provincial legislature of British Columbia about two weeks ago, in which he gives what I believe to be a conservative estimate of the possibilities of a ton of coal. He says that a ton of coal will yield 800 feet of gas, ten gallons of gasoline,