

ten years, we shall have a crop of at least 100,000,000 bushels of wheat in our North-west. I have estimated that it would require a fleet of twenty boats, carrying 200,000 bushels each to move a crop of 25,000,000 bushels by the French river route. This is on the basis of each boat making a trip a week. There would be plenty of trade left for our Canadian system of canals. I read in the Kingston 'News' a day or two ago that I was going to destroy that city if this French river scheme went through. Sir, there will be plenty of trade for the Canadian canal and for the French river route as well; there will be plenty of trade for all the ports and harbours on the lakes. That trade is going to-day to American ports—that cannot be denied. Perhaps that trade will go more and more to American ports if more Canadian railways fall into American hands. But, as I said at the opening of my remarks, the St. Lawrence river is our national property; and the Ottawa river and the French river are great national properties. When I speak of the project of improving the French river, I mean to convey the idea that it would be the beginning of that great national scheme of deepening the Ottawa river to connect it with the St. Lawrence river at Montreal. But that project would involve such a large expenditure of money that for to-day, I confine myself to the improvement of the French river. I have no data yet of the probable cost of the whole project from Georgian bay to Montreal. I am told that it is estimated to cost in the neighbourhood of one hundred millions. The Canadian government, the Canadian parliament, will not undertake such a vast expenditure of money now. But I think I am within reason, and I think I express the feeling of the large portion of the thinking business men of this country, when I speak as I do of the improvement of the French river. Of course, it must be well understood that I do not intend in any way to pledge the government to any project of that kind now. I am simply expressing the view that, as a member of the House, and even as a minister, I think I have a right to express.

Mr. CLARKE. If I may ask the minister a question I would like to ask if we are to understand him to say that, in the remarks he has just made, he does not pledge himself or the government to ask an appropriation this session to go on with the improvement of which he has just spoken.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. I have no authority to pledge the House or my colleagues to an expenditure of that kind. I am dealing with the great transportation question and calling attention of the House and the country—

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). You are educating the government.

Hon. Mr. TARTE.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. Perhaps not my hon. friend (Mr. Hughes, Victoria), but some men who have less time than some of the rest of us have—

Mr. CLARKE. May I be allowed to ask another question before I forget it? I am sure we are deeply indebted to the hon. minister for the information he has given us about the French river route and the advantages to be obtained from the improvements he suggests. I would like to know what is the distance from the termini of the Grand Trunk Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway to that particular part of the Georgian bay into which the French river empties?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. There is a very small distance indeed. My hon. friend has only to look at the map on the table to see that. The Grand Trunk Railway is located at Calander, on the south side, and the Canadian Pacific Railway at North Bay on the other side. The distance is about three miles, and the two railways are, to-day, actually connected.

Mr. CLARKE. What is the distance from where the two railways meet to the point on the Georgian bay at which the French river empties?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. The distance between Lake Nipissing and the Georgian bay is 61 miles.

Hon. Mr. HAGGART. Sixty-seven.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. Sixty-one miles, navigable water nearly the whole way. The whole course of the river is nicely navigable, if I may speak that way. It is a very deep waterway indeed.

Mr. CLARKE. Has the hon. minister given us information or can he give us the information, as to whether there are any insuperable engineering difficulties in the way of having the Grand Trunk Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway build branch lines down that sixty-one miles to the great open water of Georgian bay, instead of committing the people of Canada to a large expenditure to improve the waterway of the French river?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. I do not mean to say that I intend in any way to pledge the government to build a waterway. But I say, without any hesitation, that there are great engineering difficulties. But my hon. friend must not forget one thing—that large boats always seek to penetrate inland as far as they can. That is a law with which everybody is familiar.

Mr. SPROULE. Would the hon. minister be good enough to tell us how much nearer he brings navigation to Montreal than at the point where the railways strike the Georgian bay—how much nearer the navigation to Montreal would be than the