

*Supply—Hudson Bay Railway*

ships are not in existence to-day and must be specially constructed, and I may say that that will not faze hon. members opposite, because they always want ships, and in their specifications always arrange to provide ships which must be specially constructed, and of a class not to be found in active business in any part of the world, as for instance in the Jamaica and West India service.

But what will be the cost of constructing these ships of 5,000 to 7,000 tons for the grain trade, and of sufficient strength to meet the ice fields that will be encountered? Have we any estimates of the cost? The estimates are an important part of the proposition. If we are to deal with the feasibility of the route, the capital expenditure necessary for the completion of these ships is a relevant and salient fact which should be placed before the House. Are you going to construct these ships as a part of the Canadian Government Merchant Marine service, or are you going to subsidize them, and if you have to subsidize them, have you obtained any estimate of the cost, by way of subsidy, of securing the services of these ships during those two months and a half? That is information which the minister can obtain any time within thirty or sixty days from the shipbuilders in England, or if he wishes, from shipbuilders in Germany, who I believe furnish ships now-a-days at a little less cost. What is the capital cost? Are we going to enter upon the work of completing the Hudson Bay railway, the Hudson bay ports, and the Hudson bay services overseas without the slightest idea of what it will cost to provide the ships? The information can be obtained any time in a general way within sixty days. What is to be the cost of insurance on freight and ship from Port Nelson overseas? That enters into the cost of the carriage of grain or other freight. Have you sought information from the great marine insurance companies? Certainly the insurance rate will be higher during those two months

than the rate of insurance to any other Canadian port from Liverpool or any European port. That excess adds to the cost. In other words, Mr. Chairman, this House, as a body of intelligent business men, should know, and should know now before we enter upon the completion of that line to Port Nelson, what would be the cost of providing the ships, and of providing facilities in the bay, including light houses and attendants and including the radio stations and telegraph stations, and all the paraphernalia necessary to open up that strait, bay

[Mr. Cahan.]

and estuary, so as to make it a feasible commercial proposition for steamers to enter there.

Hon. members say the Hudson's Bay Company has been operating in the Hudson bay for some hundred or more years, but I have read something of the history of the Hudson's Bay Company, and I do not believe that until this year, or last year at the earliest, the Hudson's Bay Company ever placed a steamship in their ocean service to the Hudson bay. Their ships were sailing vessels similar to those used years ago to trade out of Newfoundland and Maritime province ports up into the Hudson bay. Time was of no consequence in their voyages. They fitted out for the north and for the Hudson bay, and it was quite immaterial to them whether they returned that year or the following year. They provided themselves with sufficient supplies to enable them to remain there the whole winter. If they were caught in the ice they stayed there, and when the spring freshets came and the water of Hudson bay or the estuary warmed up and the ice melted, they took up their hawsers and started out. That sort of navigation of the Hudson bay offers no precedent whatever for the commercial operation of ships on a business and profitable basis, for the purpose of placing the grain trade of the middle west on a more economic and profitable basis than it is at present.

Therefore I say that we require more information. No body of business men who sit on the board of any company entering upon a large construction such as that would authorize an expenditure of \$500,000 or \$50,000 and rely on the feasibility of the project on such information as is available to this House at present. We are told that we may open up in that district a mineral belt, and that as a colonization road it may prove profitable. A private member of this chamber has difficulty in getting information. Even if I asked some of the engineers in the employ of the Department of Railways, they do not like it to be known that they are giving information to a member of the opposition, whether he sits on the front bench or a rear bench, but sometimes one can obtain some information from the outside. I have no doubt from the reports I have that there is mineral wealth in that country. Why then should we not have from some department of the government a complete return of all information available regarding the mineral resources of the district? That would help members on this side of the House to a