

EVIDENCE OF J. K. CORNWALL, HEARD BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE, APRIL 5, 1907.

Mr. Cornwall explained that he is a practical 'river man' of seventeen years' experience, and at present engaged in the transportation business on northern waters. He has lived in the north country for ten years. He considers the waterways of the Mackenzie watershed as perhaps the finest in North America.

The most southern point reached by navigation on the Mackenzie watershed is at Fort McMurray at the junction of the Clearwater and Athabaska rivers, a point about 275 miles north, and a little east of Edmonton. The distance from McMurray to the Arctic ocean is approximately 1,600 miles. In all this distance the connected waterways are navigable for steamers that are now plying upon them, and have been for twenty years. There are in this long system of waterways two distinct divisions.

One extending from Fort McMurray to Smith's Landing is 300 miles in length, and at low water you are restricted to a draft of two feet. That is only in the fall of the year, when the waters are usually low in the north. During the spring season and summer season there is ample water for any draft that you might see fit to load on a steamer of the type that has been plying on this stretch of water for 20 years, that is the stern wheel type.

From Smith's Landing to Fort Smith is a distance of 16 miles, and there is a series of falls occurring in this stretch of the Slave river of about 250 feet in all.

From Fort Smith to the mouth of the Mackenzie the type of steamer now plying is the propeller type, and the greatest draft that they can load during the low water season is five feet. Propeller steamers are the type most suited for this end of the route, and vessels of that type have plied there for 20 years.

The Hudson Bay Company are now building at Fort Smith a steamer to take the place of the old steamer *Wrigley*. It will go into commission in the spring of 1908. This steamer is being built at great cost, and when completed will bring the 'Land of the Midnight Sun' two weeks nearer Edmonton, on account of superior speed and equipment.

With a tramway at Smith's to give despatch to the handling of freight and passengers that are, up to the present time, being handled in the old primitive way (the portages on the river being made with the assistance of carts and oxen), and if in the future there is railroad transportation from Edmonton to McMurray, it will be a very simple matter to go from Edmonton to the Arctic and return in 30 days.

From McMurray up the Athabaska, for a distance of 100 miles, the physical features of the river are of such a nature that steamer navigation is impossible. The making of it navigable for steamers would be so costly that the amount of business now and in the immediate future would not warrant the improvement of that part of the river. If it was otherwise the Mackenzie watershed could be tapped at Athabaska Landing by steamers which would bring the watershed then to within 100 miles of Edmonton. As it is, McMurray is the nearest point at which a railroad could touch and tap this immense waterway.

The stretch of waterway between McMurray and Smith's Landing has another important connection. By swinging to the west at Lake Athabaska, and going up the Peace, navigation on this river for a distance of 1,000 miles is found with one interruption, namely, at the Vermilion Chutes, which occur five miles above where the Little Red river puts into the Peace and causes a break in this stretch of navigation. A tramway of a mile and a half in distance would have to be built at this point. A transshipment of goods would have to occur here to connect with the steamers now plying