

*Hudson Bay Railway*

have the Canadian National Railways Board charged with them.

I think that the debate to-day has covered more territory and has been as instructive, to put it mildly, as any previous debate we have ever had on this subject. The members who have spoken have shown that they have read a good deal. They have been in the Library quite frequently, I can see that. They have done their utmost to secure the data which would assist them in placing the case as they saw it before this House.

I am not going to argue with any person, but I would like to make a reference to the Welland canal as that has been mentioned by one or two members. I plead guilty to several things, if guilt there be attached, and one of these is the beginning of the surveys for the enlarging of the Welland canal. I did so not for eastern Canada but for western Canada and at the request and after urgent petitions and depositions of men engaged on the plains in grain growing that we should enlarge the Welland canal so as to reduce if possible the rate of transportation from the head of the Great Lakes to the seaboard. The Welland canal is not for the East; it is not for the West; it is for all Canada, and that is the way I think hon. gentlemen ought to accept that expenditure. Had it not been for our great West, what would we have had to induce us to enlarge the Welland canal? It was the wheat, the product of the western prairies, that first impelled the government to begin the enlargement of the Welland canal, and when that is finished I believe that it will afford some relief even if the St. Lawrence be not deepened for some little time, by allowing the larger cargoes to go many miles further east before being trans-shipped to smaller vessels and canalized to the city of Montreal.

It has been said that lands were appropriated for the Hudson Bay railway. I always hesitate to deal with a statute, not being of the legal brotherhood myself, but I want to present this to the House as I see it, so that we shall be clear as to what took place. In the statute of 1906 the following appears as subsection C of section 6:

Make a free grant of land, not exceeding in extent six thousand four hundred acres for each mile of railway within Manitoba, and not exceeding in extent twelve thousand eight hundred acres for each mile beyond the limits of Manitoba, in aid of the construction of a railway from some point on the Canadian Pacific railway to Hudson bay;

Mr. MEIGHEN: Would the minister read the first part of the section?

Mr. GRAHAM: Oh, yes.

[Mr. Graham.]

The Governor in Council may make a free grant of land, etc.

That covers the point which I think I wish to make. It provides in this statute that the Governor in Council can make a free grant of land for the construction of the Hudson bay project from a point on the Canadian Pacific railway. That was in 1906. So it is very manifest that the Governor in Council, in 1906, was given power, at least, to appropriate large areas of land for the construction of a railway from somewhere on the Canadian Pacific to Hudson bay. Now if we look at the statute passed in 1908—known as the Dominion Lands Act—we find that under section 27 the right was given for a homesteader to purchase a pre-emption, and while nothing is said about the Hudson Bay railway, or any portion of it, the debates in the House would indicate that the government had in mind at that time the idea of selling these pre-emptions and taking the money—or a portion of it at least—for the construction of the Hudson Bay railway, rather than granting such a company, or any company a free grant of land for that purpose. Consequently this act of 1908, as I understand it, repeals the act of 1906 so far as the Hudson Bay railway is concerned.

One hon. gentleman opposite—referring to the remarks of Mr. Oliver, who was in 1908 a member of the government—I think I need not repeat those remarks—has made it clear in the discussion of the matter by Mr. Oliver that it was the intention of the government first to allow the Governor in Council to make a land grant in 1906 to any company to build a railway to Hudson bay; but that in 1908 that act was repealed, in so far as it referred to the land grant, and provided for the sale of pre-emptions, with the explanation of Mr. Oliver particularly, as reported in Hansard, that the money from those pre-emptions might well be taken for the construction of the Hudson Bay railway. Now Sir, I think there could be no question that there was in the mind of parliament—at least the idea was expressed as fairly as it could be without putting the words in the statute—that certain lands might be sold and the money received from those lands as pre-emptions used to construct the Hudson Bay railway.

I am not going at all into the question of the feasibility of the navigation of the straits, or the question of the proper port, except to say this, that during the time that I had the honour of being a member of the Laurier administration I thought we had that question fairly well investigated; and I have yet to find an engineer who will accept the responsibility