

The foregoing shows the importance of the projected Canadian system of railways as great through lines of communication, and points to special advantages which possibly may be possessed by Saguenay on the St. Lawrence, below Quebec and Port Nelson, on Hudson Bay. Surveys alone can determine the entire practicability of the portions of these lines through unexplored districts, but it would appear that a railway from Port Simpson to Saguenay, if established as sketched on the map, would, as compared with the line *via* New York and San Francisco, shorten the distance between Europe and Asia, according to the above estimates 1,570 miles. Saguenay would have this advantage during the season of navigation only; in winter, any traffic by this route would find its way *via* Quebec, over the Intercolonial, to Halifax.

Port Nelson could scarcely be considered as a terminal point for transcontinental traffic; but as a shipping port for the products of the interior during some of the summer months, it may hereafter prove of value.* This is evident from the fact that a point in the heart of the Saskatchewan District, would, by way of Port Nelson, be nearer Liverpool than Chicago is by way of New York. A railway from Battleford, a point on the Saskatchewan, 557 miles west of Red River, to Port Nelson, would be about 770 miles in length, while Chicago is some 950 miles distant from New York, and New York is about 80 miles further from Liverpool than Port Nelson.

It may further be shown how advantageously Port Nelson is situated to the great fertile tract extending from Peace River easterly, and how important a railway such as that projected on the map may hereafter prove, if it be found practicable to carry products *via* Hudson Bay to England during even a limited portion of the year. By this route, Lac La Biche, on the 112th meridian, and in the middle of an extensive district reported to be of rare fertility, would, by the projected line to Port Nelson be relatively nearer Liverpool than Chicago.

* Port Nelson River, or, as now termed, Nelson River, is the outlet through which drains the whole of the rivers and lakes included within the basin of Lake Winnipeg, extending from the Rocky Mountains on the west to within one hundred miles of the shores of Lake Superior on the east, and covering a drainage area of about 360,000 square miles.

Port Nelson is about eighty miles nearer to Liverpool, *via* Hudson Straits, than is New York. It is at the mouth of a river of the first class, carrying a body of water double that of the north and south branches of the Saskatchewan combined, and it reaches the sea through a narrow depression in the Laurentides, having a descent of about twenty inches in a mile, or, in round numbers, seven hundred feet in a little more than four hundred statute miles from the spot where it debouches from Lake Winnipeg.

Port Nelson, moreover, is about the same distance from the edge of a vast fertile region in the North-West, exceeding two hundred millions of acres in area, as Quebec is from Toronto.

For more than two hundred years from two to five sailing vessels, on an average, frequently with war ships convoying them, have sailed annually from Europe and America to Port Nelson, or other ports in Hudson Bay, and returned with cargoes the same season *via* the only available route, Hudson Straits.

In view of the growing interests of the North-West, from whatever point these may be regarded, the time for enquiry has arrived, whether communication with the Atlantic Ocean, with Port Nelson as a starting point, may not be made safe, speedy and economical. The enquiry has become a natural consequence of the extended knowledge now made public respecting the vast area in the North-West, suitable for grain growing and for pasturage, which the Government surveys have supplied. It is also encouraged by the great changes which have taken place during the last ten years in the prosecution of the sealing industry, which have established the fact that properly constructed vessels of large capacity are, in skilful hands, perfectly adapted to push their way through ice-encumbered seas. It has been pressed forward by the new industry, so rapidly rising into importance, which gives additional wealth to the prairies of the west and south-west in the United States, by the European demand for their live products as well as for their grain.

The establishment of a cheap and speedy means of communication between the North-West and the open Atlantic *via* Hudson Straits, would not only secure the rapid settlement of Manitoba, but open to successful immigration a fertile area twenty times as large as that Province. The proximity of this vast extent of country to its own seaboard would, under such conditions, also secure the carrying trade of its own productions under one and the same flag.—*Evidence of Prof. Hind before a Committee of the Commons of Canada, 1878.*