

Supply—Hudson Bay Railway

I see nothing whatever to be gained by adding expense by a prolonged investigation into this matter. We have had two complete investigations into this whole situation at two different periods of our history; we have already spent a lot of money and this route is either feasible or it is not feasible. Surely we can decide on the evidence before us to-day and not waste time and money in further consideration.

Mr. FOSTER: I rise to speak on this subject with a great deal of diffidence, Mr. Chairman, because I fancy I am the only member of this House who has ever been in Hudson bay. Consequently I have had an opportunity of encountering the actual conditions there, and it might be supposed that I would have some personal knowledge of those conditions. But a little personal knowledge, however little it might be, would certainly unfit one for speaking on a subject of this kind. That reminds me somewhat of after-dinner speeches, of which they say he makes the best after-dinner speech who announces his subject, departs from it and never approaches it again during the length of his discourse. But the fact remains that in this particular vote and in all subsequent votes which will come before the House in the decades yet to come before we effectively dispose of this subject, I have a peculiar interest.

In the first place I represent a constituency in the far eastern part of Canada which cannot possibly be benefited to any material extent by this route if it is proven feasible and developed into a great grain-carrying route. If it should be economically sound to carry grain from the west by this route I am sure the grain going by Buffalo and the American ports, plus that which goes by this new northern route, will entirely overlook that route especially built to carry grain from Winnipeg to Quebec and the Maritimes, the Transcontinental railway. So in any case this will tend to sidetrack the portion of the country from which I come.

That, however, is not the main point to be considered because I realize, as the people of Nova Scotia have always realized since they came into confederation, that we must give a great deal in order to benefit the whole of Canada. If they have become a little tired of giving and not getting very much in return, as they think, I can assure you that it is projects such as these together with the great amount of money spent upon railways all over the country that have brought them partly to that conclusion.

I do not say that I am not going to support this vote, but my first objection is that in my

[Mr. Campbell.]

humble judgment this is not the time in the affairs of Canada when we should embark upon a \$3,000,000, \$10,000,000, \$20,000,000 or \$50,000,000 project regarding transportation. I cannot help come to the conclusion that we have been spending money in this country on transportation problems for the last twenty-five years, piling up deficit after deficit year after year until we now have a staggering debt on the shoulders of our people. Yet hon. gentlemen opposite as well as hon. members on this side of the House get up and wave their arms in enthusiastic support of schemes of this character, which would indicate at least that our burden is very light indeed. It was that self same enthusiasm which sent us into our railway problems as we have them in Canada to-day; it was that same enthusiasm, without proper examination and proper information, which has cost this country millions of dollars which we will never get back.

What is the financial situation of Canada to-day? Hon. gentlemen might consider for a moment our national debt of \$2,422,000,000; add to that if you will the provincial debts of \$784,000,000 and the municipal debts of another \$794,000,000. Then figure the amount of money borrowed from outside Canada, upon which we have to pay interest every year, and we arrive at the staggering sum of 8,000 million dollars owing by this little Dominion of 9,000,000 people, on which sum we have to pay interest. I say that when we start in on propositions of this kind by voting \$3,000,000 now—and unquestionably in the next fifteen or twenty years it will take \$50,000,000 or \$75,000,000—we should go very carefully. Considering this debt we should pause before bringing in, for sentimental reasons only, a measure of this kind and proceeding to vote millions of dollars in this way.

That total of 8,000 million dollars owing by 9,000,000 people means \$940 for every man, woman and child in this country. There is nothing wrong about these figures; they have been compiled by reputable business men, and are correct. The total is staggering, and the people of my constituency are asking themselves what this project means so far as they are concerned. I made a little notation here extending it over a period of twenty-five years, and assuming that the expenditure reaches \$50,000,000. With \$20,000,000 already spent, on the basis of 4 per cent it will mean \$2,000,000 to the province of Nova Scotia, or for my own constituency alone something like \$140,000 as a capital charge. On that sum the interest each year will amount to \$8,000 or \$10,000.