

Peace River—Railway Outlet

As to its being a good business proposition, it has been amply shown that there is an empire in this territory. A few years ago I met a number of people who had prospected through it and they told me that they had found a mine that was practically solid copper. The only way they could get any of that copper to the railroad was by making sleighs which were pulled down the mountain-side by hand, after which the ore was loaded on pack horses and packed twenty miles to the railroad. That sort of development is too slow; it is too much out of date.

Someone mentioned during the course of the debate that opportunity should be provided for young people with initiative, that people with the pioneering spirit should be given every advantage that would be derived from living in this particular area. I am satisfied that if the railroad were put through a great many young people with pioneering spirit, a great many returned men who are looking for an opportunity to establish themselves, would find opportunity there.

It is quite possible that there may be an economic recession in the near future. We have found in the past that when there is government expenditure on the opening up of a new empire or a new territory an opportunity is given to those who have stored up capital to put that capital into circulation and thus stave off a possible recession.

I see the minister has been in his seat all during this debate and I see also that he has a file on his desk. I am hoping that before eleven o'clock he will give us some inkling of what the government is thinking about in this connection, and so I shall not take up any more time.

* Mr. J. R. MacNICOL (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, I have received a number of communications from Peace River, Grimshaw, Berwyn and other towns on the north side of the Peace river. On a former occasion when a similar matter was before the house I received communications from Grande Prairie, Dawson Creek and other towns on the south side of the river. Therefore I feel compelled to say a few words, but I shall be brief.

I have traversed both sides of the river, east and west and north and south. This is one part of Canada that has been—I was going to say shamefully, but that is not the right word—not very satisfactorily treated by the railroads. I am not blaming the railroads. I have in mind one of the pioneers of the area, a man who went in by wagon from Edmonton to the town of Peace River. I imagine he has been there for about forty or more years, perhaps as many as fifty years, and all that time

[Mr. Campbell.]

he has been advocating the building and later the extension of the railways running into that part of the country. I refer to Page Rideout who has perhaps done more to obtain a Pacific outlet than anyone else that I know of. At much personal expense he has travelled all over the area and has delivered addresses in practically all the towns in British Columbia and Alberta that have been mentioned in the course of this debate. I think of other prominent business men who have been associated with him, such as Mr. Henry Jerry, Mr. J. D. Levesque, Mr. Pierre Gauvreau, Mr. J. B. Early and others. All of them were pioneers. They, along with the boards of trade of their respective towns, have been ardent advocates of the extension of these railways.

When I commenced my remarks I said that I did not think this area had been treated very satisfactorily by the railways. For instance, the railway running north from the fine city of Edmonton, after travelling perhaps four hundred miles, reaches McLennan, where there is a junction or fork. One line of railroad then runs north to Peace River. That is a real town, and in my opinion some day it will be a city. It is a splendid town, with fine prospects. The railway crosses the river there over a big steel bridge and runs along the north side of the river, finally ending at what is called Hines Creek, and there it ends, as one might say, up in the air. It is a splendid territory as far as Fort St. John and beyond that for one hundred miles in every direction. The whole area, as one hon. member has said has been denied adequate transportation ever since the pioneers went in there. I was talking to one pioneer in the town of Grimshaw, and he told me that he had gone in to Notikewin, north of Grimshaw thirty-seven years ago and that at that time the map he looked at when he was choosing his lot showed a railway running up to that part of the country. It is too bad what those pioneers have had to endure in transporting their grain and other products to market. The railway should have gone west as far as Fort St. John or beyond on the north side of the river years and years ago.

Turning to the south side of the river you see something. Your Honour, that is almost incredible so far as railways are concerned. The railway runs west from McLennan junction to Spirit River, and there it originally ended up in the air, so to speak. If you go there now on the train, the train takes you as far as Spirit River, and then it backs east a mile or more to Rycroft, where it turns directly south and runs well on to a hundred miles to the fine