

*Peace River Railway Outlet*

have to-day thousands of people on the dole, doing nothing to earn what it is costing the country to provide for them. We have manufacturing plants eager for work to supply the requirements for the construction of that road; everyone in the country is demanding expenditure of some kind, and if there ever was such a thing as a self-liquidating enterprise, this is one. Having all these considerations in mind, the minister is to be congratulated upon ceasing further dissimulation. I urge very strongly that the house should not take the statement of the hon. Minister of Railways as conclusive in this regard. I think it is a matter that we should seriously consider, and I hope the government will reconsider the decision which evidently they have reached.

Mr. ALFRED SPEAKMAN (Red Deer): Having entered the house some years ago at the same time as the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Kennedy), I have naturally heard him present his case a good many times in a good many successive years, but I have never heard him present it in a more masterly manner. I congratulate him sincerely upon his pertinacity, upon his determined activity on behalf of his people, and upon the logical and convincing arguments with which he supported his request. I do not live in that part of the country, nor are my people directly affected by the proposed railway, but as a matter of public policy it does seem to me that every argument is in favour of its construction; there is no sound argument against it.

Ten years ago this matter was considered. During the last ten years conditions have materially changed. At the time of the census before the last one there was a population of possibly 40,000 in that great area. To-day in considering redistribution we find that the population has practically doubled, that we have almost 80,000 people there. The conditions laid down ten years ago as being essential before the construction of this outlet should be undertaken have been more than fulfilled. The potential freight then suggested as essential before a railway should be considered has been reached and more than reached; the freight is now available. The people who have gone there, as has been said, thousands of them—yes, you might almost say tens of thousands of them—have made their last stand there. They were confronted with natural difficulties and handicaps year after year, and finally left the district in which they originally settled and moved out to a country where they know that as far as nature is concerned they will have their chance. They have made their last stand there, have driven

[Mr. Hanbury.]

in their last stake, pinned their last hope upon building their homes and developing their farms and doing their part to build up their country.

I am not going to speak at length; I simply suggest that there is only one objection which can be or has been offered to the building of this outlet. So far as decision regarding the route the line should follow is concerned, I can only say that if that has not been decided upon by now, it is a grave reflection upon the skill, the intelligence and wisdom of those concerned; because, as the hon. member for Peace River has said, never have I known of any piece of proposed railway construction being considered so long, surveyed so frequently, taken under consideration so definitely and so persistently as this one. Surely every relevant fact must be known, every consideration must have been given weight to; and if the engineers have not by this time made up their minds, then it is about time we had other engineers. The only real argument brought against it is the financial question: Can we at this time afford to do this thing? Mr. Speaker, although I stand for every reasonable economy—I say reasonable economy—I believe we have here an investment which is more than justified, not only for the sake of the people of that country, not only for the sake of its future development; we have a situation where governments are straining every nerve to provide sustenance for the people, with 800,000 to 1,000,000 on direct relief, and everyone agrees that from the point of view of morale as well as from the point of view of investment it is much better to provide work for these people than to give them direct relief. Here we have a project which would meet all these conditions, which would at once provide work and sustenance for the people, and a means of keeping up their morale, would develop the country, fulfil a promise, and enable tens of thousands of people to build their homes and realize their ambitions. It does seem to me that at no time and for no project would a further addition to our national debt be more completely justified than in accepting this proposal and placing that part of this great country upon a parity with the rest of the dominion.

Mr. CAMERON R. McINTOSH (North Battleford): Mr. Speaker, coming from a northern riding in Saskatchewan, I rise to support the resolution moved by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Kennedy) and spoken to by the hon. member for Cariboo (Mr. Fraser) and members on this side of the house. It would appear to me that this