

tain of a tramp steamer going to the port of Montreal did not know the route, had never been there before, and the insurance rates going up the Gulf were very heavy—we used to have marine losses on the St. Lawrence river, and all these things hindered Montreal in getting tramp ships to come there. The Marine Department has improved navigation on the river, and there are better pilots. I think that for the last two seasons we have not had a loss on the St. Lawrence river which amounted to anything, which shows that it is just as good a stream to navigate as there is in any part of the world.

Hon. W. B. ROSS: Does the pilot go from Montreal right out to sea?

Hon. Mr. RICHARDSON: Yes, the pilot goes to Father Point.

Hon. Mr. EDWARDS: Can you ship as cheaply by tramp steamers as you can by passenger vessels?

Hon. Mr. RICHARDSON: Oh, yes, more cheaply—perhaps three cents a quarter, or three-eighths of a cent a bushel. You get consideration because the cargo is poured in quickly, and you guarantee to load in three or four days, as the case may be, or pay a penalty. The tramps ship has one hold, and likes to get a load of one kind of stuff. For this reason the rates are a little cheaper and we are able to sell the cargo in Europe and compete with shipment from other ports. In the future there will be tramp steamers at Montreal and Quebec which will be of great assistance to the trade, and when our lake navigation is fixed up as it should be there is no route on this continent over which grain can be carried as cheaply as by the St. Lawrence.

Hon. Mr. THOMPSON: What about the Hudson bay?

Hon. Mr. RICHARDSON: If the Hudson bay route were possible, it is impracticable. Years ago I advised the Government to hire a couple of Norwegian tramp steamers and to put them in to service for a couple of years in order to demonstrate how many voyages they could make to the Hudson bay and back. There are things which make the Hudson bay route impossible in the grain trade. Grain is liquid. In that respect it is as near to gold as anything on earth; there is always a market for it; it can be sold any day between ten o'clock in the morning and one o'clock; therefore a banker considers that it is the very best margin security that he can have,

and he is willing to go within 10 cents a bushel of its value. But would he advance 10 cents a bushel if you put it in the Hudson bay? There is another point to be considered. Grain has to be carried for months and months. Our crop in the Northwest does not come out until October; that grain would not get to the Hudson bay until the season of navigation was closed, and it would have to be kept there until the next June.

Hon. Mr. POWER: July.

Hon. Mr. RICHARDSON: It costs a cent a bushel a month for insurance and another cent a bushel for interest. If you keep the grain there for seven or eight months you have 16 cents a bushel against it, and whatever price you get for it you are putting it into the cheapest market to meet the American soft wheat raised in Texas and Oklahoma which is shipped in July and August. As a crop proposition or a banking proposition it is an impossibility.

Hon. Mr. McMEANS: Do you think any of the grain will go by way of Vancouver and the Panama Canal?

Hon. Mr. RICHARDSON: I see no reason why it should not. I think the time will come when the wheat from the Edmonton district and Southern Alberta may be routed through the Panama Canal by way of Vancouver. That route is quite feasible if you have a crop of good hard grain. If you had a crop like that of last year, which was not harvested until the winter when there was ice and snow all through it, which moistened it so that it would not keep, I think that route would be exceedingly dangerous.

I think that the port of Quebec should have business this year, as it is within the power of the Government to give it, because it is going to save ocean tonnage. Ocean tonnage at present is worth \$5,000 or \$6,000 a day, and there is not enough of it to go around. We are straining every nerve in this country to build ships. Today the Government is paying four times the ordinary value per ton for ships. I think a man could go out to-day and get a contract to build a ship at from \$175 to \$200 a ton. \$40 a ton has been the European price for ships in the past.

To-day our railroads are doing better; they are moving their freight. What they will do when the grain has to be moved is a question that I cannot answer. The rail-