

SECTION C.—EVIDENCE RELATING TO THE NAVIGABILITY OF HUDSON BAY AND HUDSON STRAIT, AS AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE NORTHWESTERN REGIONS OF CANADA.

CONTINUATION OF THE EVIDENCE OF A. P. LOW, B.A.P. SC., F.R.G.S., GIVEN BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 7, 1907.

Mr. Low having completed his evidence as to the resources, &c., of Ungava and the country north of the Saskatchewan watershed, was asked a number of questions regarding the natural features of James bay and Hudson bay, and others on the general question of the practicability of the Hudson bay route.

Mr. Low stated that there are really no good harbours on the southern part of James bay. The water is shallow, and at tide, rises six or seven feet. There are a number of bars in the mouths of the rivers, so that the channels are in some places crooked and generally obstructed and narrowed up in a number of places. If these harbours are to be made fit for ocean-going steamers, there will have to be considerable expenditure upon them.

These harbours could be dredged out, witness thought. The bottom is mud and boulders and drift. A harbour for smaller craft, twelve feet or so of water, could probably be got. Harbours of that draught would be more easily obtainable.

Moose river is at present the best known harbour there. When ships come down into that part of the bay, the captains can generally tell their distance from the land by the depth of water; it increases in depth about six feet to the mile. They come in out of the fairly deep water approaching the mouth of the Moose river till they get into about three fathoms, and then they look for a buoy to the narrow entrance to the river. There is a bar ten miles long which completely crosses the mouth of the river, and there is just a narrow entrance to that bar, on which there is about fourteen feet of water at high tide, and all ships have to go through it. The Hudson bay post is fairly well channelled and beacons. After passing over the bar they go up the river about six or seven miles to the anchoring place, where the water is 18 feet deep at low tide, and coming to the present Hudson bay post there are several places where there is only six or seven feet of water, and some of these are narrow, so it is fairly good navigation to get up to them.

Mr. Low explained that he had never been in the Albany river, but it is bad; in fact, it is worse than the Moose.

There is a harbour at the mouth of the Nottaway river at which he has never been either, but they say there is a decent three-fathom channel up to it through the middle of Rupert bay. For a long distance you do not get more than three fathoms of water, and to get out of that at low water tide soon gets one into difficulty. He had a small craft that drew three feet of water, and he used to run on ground in Rupert bay regularly, just simply through not knowing the channel. The mouth of the Rupert river is about in the same state. There is your channel that runs out and meets the channel coming from the Nottaway, and you have to follow that up. There are only two or three fathoms of water in these channels.

There is not much fog in the bay. The weather is fairly clear in the summer time. Churchill is the only present natural harbour on the south side of the bay. That is the first harbour going north.