

Supply—Hudson Bay Railway

Mr. CAHAN: My hon. friend, I have noticed since he came into this House, has the habit, which he no doubt acquired when he was dealing with another body, of asking questions the implication of which is very unpleasant and unfortunate, and which is not in accordance with the fact on which his questions are based. There is no desire whatever on my part to mislead him, and I am not endeavouring to mislead the House either. The House knows and clearly understands, if it has not permeated the dull intellect of the hon. gentleman, that I was not attributing that statement to Mr. McLachlan. But I have Mr. McLachlan's own statement and his sworn evidence before the Senate committee of 1920 where he said:

I have thought a great deal about the difficulties of building a railway across barren land, and the only way that I can see would be by the construction of a continuous pile threstle or a continuous timber platform. The Hudson Bay railway through out almost its entire length is not built of solid material, such as clear sand and gravel, but is constructed out of the vegetable material of the country. This creates an embankment which is compressible and has a tremendous shrinkage, and would require a large amount of ballast continuously applied for a great many years.

That is Mr. McLachlan's evidence upon it, and I think it quite fully supports the private report which I obtained in making personal inquiries of gentlemen who have been over that line.

Mr. McLachlan, in another report which I have at hand, has dealt with the comparative costs of shipping grain from the middle west to Europe via Port Nelson and other routes. At page 39 of this report, No. 234A, he deals with the cost of building at Port Nelson elevators, and compares the cost with the cost of building similar elevators at the city of Montreal or at Fort William. He says:

The cost of constructing the elevators at Port Nelson may be taken as 50 per cent advance on Montreal and lake port costs.

The annual operating cost for labour, material and repairs at the Port Nelson elevators can be taken at 90 per cent of that at Montreal or at the lake ports.

The operating cost per ton mile, north of The Pas on the Hudson Bay railway, may be taken at 80 per cent advance on the rates used in other parts of Canada.

The general rail rates should be taken at sufficient to pay interest on equipment and out of pocket costs, which is probably about 60 cents per 100-ton mile, except on the Hudson Bay railway.

The grain facilities at Port Nelson and other ports may be taken for estimate purposes, at 2 elevators of 3,500,000 bushels capacity each with 4,000 lineal feet of deep water berthing space in front of them.

The stay in port of each ship may be taken at five days in ocean ports and four days in lake ports.

[Mr. Dunning.]

The cost of docks and dredging in Port Nelson may be taken at double that in Montreal and four times that at the head and foot of the lakes, where pile construction can be used.

And then he gives a tabulated statement—dealing solely with the cost of elevators and their operation—showing that the cost of transfer per bushel at Port Nelson would be 8.9 cents, at Montreal 1.27 cents, and at the head and foot of the Great Lakes 1.13 cents, showing a very considerable difference in the expense of operating the proposed elevators at Port Nelson.

Then at page 40 he gives a table showing the transport costs from Humboldt—which he selects as a typical point—to Liverpool via various routes. I will not give the entire statement, I will simply state the results of his findings. He finds that via the Hudson Bay railway and Port Nelson the minimum cost per long ton of grain freight will be \$12.63. He finds that the present rate, via the lakes and rail to Montreal, is \$12.17; and he finds that via the St. Lawrence, upon the completion of the Welland canal, the rate will show a reduction to \$10.96. In the face of that report I ask hon. gentlemen to believe at least that the practical business men of Montreal are not jealous of, and are not opposed to the opening of, a rival port so-called when the cost of operating from a point like Humboldt in the middle west to Liverpool will be at least \$1.67 per long ton more via Port Nelson than via Montreal.

I do not wish to take up more of the time of the House but the position as I see it is this. I have spent a very considerable time in reading the official reports included in the records of the House, which reports, some printed and some not, are available to members and which are at the disposal of any hon. member who will call at room 108 where he will find every courtesy extended to him if he wishes to explore these papers. I find it difficult to conceive how any experienced practical business man can assume that even if the line is completed, even if the terminal works are carried out on the scale suggested by the Minister of Railways—but which he has not pledged himself to carry out, as I understand it—you can carry grain from the middle west via—

(Mr. Speakman, member for Red Deer, having entered the House after an absence of several weeks owing to illness.)

Mr. CAHAN: If I may be allowed, I wish on behalf of hon. members on this side, and I am sure also on behalf of hon. members