

anything in my power to open up that country and develop its resources, and would be willing to go as far as any man to construct a through line to Hudson Bay, if communication with the outside world for commercial purposes was feasible by that route—although I say I would be willing to go as far as any member of this House to support a scheme tending to that result, I do not believe even if we had all the information we would require—which we have not on these points, that at the present moment we are in a position to assume any fresh responsibility. I see by the papers recently that the contractors have gone out to Manitoba and intend to enter at once upon the work of construction. Now, I think it would be a kindness on our part to let them know that they should not do so hastily—they should not incur any expenditure until they are satisfied that Parliament is at the back of the government in regard to this project, and if they do, they should be given to understand it is at their own risk. They must be warned in time that if they make any mistake of this kind, it will give them no claim to be reimbursed their losses from the public funds. I will conclude my remarks which, to some extent, may, perhaps, be considered premature in the absence of the information I desire to obtain, by reading an extract from the *Montreal Gazette*, an organ not unfriendly to the government, the sound sense of whose article must commend it to the approval of this House :

A despatch from Ottawa brings information that Mr. Hugh Sutherland has gone west for the purpose of starting, with the new contractors, the construction of the Hudson Bay railway. The despatch adds that it is intended to begin building immediately at Gladstone, Manitoba, under the terms of the Order in Council passed on the subject. It would be prudent, in our opinion, before any liabilities are created in connection with this work that the contractors should be assured that the money to pay them will be forthcoming when earned, and that the government should be assured that the Order in Council will be approved by Parliament. Our understanding of the subject is that the Order in Council commits the Cabinet to nothing beyond a submission of the propositions of the company to Parliament with a favourable recommendation, so that if in the view of Parliament it is inexpedient and undesirable to burden the public finances with a large liability on account of this project, the responsibility of the government will at once terminate. The contractors, therefore, might do worse in their own interest than to refrain from spending money in connection with the work they have undertaken until their security is better determined. The business of the ministry is with Parliament and the public, and it would

be well to ascertain the opinion of both upon the merits of the proposed aid to the Hudson Bay road before any steps in the direction of legislation are even attempted.

I hope this warning voice will be heeded by the promoters of the Hudson Bay Railway and that the work of construction will not be entered on until it is certain that Parliament is at the back of the government in regard to its new policy.

Hon. Mr. BOULTON—Before the hon. leader of the government replies to the hon. member from Richmond, I should like to take advantage of the question that has been put by the hon. member to give some information, as well as my views upon the subject that is now before this House, in view of the public interest that is being taken in the project, not only in the press of Canada but in the minds of a large number of people. Before proceeding with the subject I desire to point out this fact, that it is doubtful what the motive is for the opposition to the Hudson Bay Railway, whether it is in consequence of the possibility of its diverting trade and traffic from eastern channels, or whether it is in consequence of the large grant that it is proposed to give in aid of the enterprise. Probably a little of both may be the incentive that has led to the criticism that it is now receiving. I would, however, say this that so far as diverting trade and traffic from eastern channels is concerned, the people of Canada are now permitting, in consequence of the policy which is being pursued with regard to our trade and navigation laws, the wheat trade of that great western country to find its way by the city of New York to Europe instead of through the port of Montreal. We all know in the west that the bulk of the wheat trade of our western country found its way this year by way of Buffalo and the Erie Canal, through the port of New York, and if we are going to be satisfied that our trade and traffic shall pass through New York instead of by way of Montreal what objection can there be in allowing the Hudson Bay Railway to go on if we, in that western country, believe that it is a practicable route and that it is going to increase the competition that is absolutely essential to the welfare of the people in that country? The argument that the Hudson Bay Railway is going to divert