

Winnipeg west largely through a new country, a vast unsettled region, a region supposed to contain the richest and most productive land in the North-west. It will open up a region from north of the Saskatchewan to Dunvegan on the Peace river; and thence up the Peace River valley and through the Peace River pass to Fort Simpson on the Pacific ocean. The road will cross the Rockies by easy grades. The summit of the Peace River pass, has an altitude about 1,800 feet above the sea. The construction of the mountain section, as it is termed, will be found to be much less expensive and much less difficult probably than is now anticipated. This western terminus will place the port that is its terminus much nearer to Asiatic ports in north China and Japan than any other port on the Pacific ocean. While the length of the road is somewhat greater than to Vancouver, the distance by the ocean to the ports named is very much less, and so this route will have important advantages in the overland and oriental trade over any other line. It will reach Quebec by easy grades, by a direct line, and in this respect will be superior to any other possible route from the west to that city. It will open up the great clay belt of this northern region, a clay belt that is supposed to contain sixteen million acres of arable land now lying unoccupied, not possible of being occupied, because it has no means of communication with the outer world. It will open up that clay belt, and it will open up all the timber resources, all the agricultural resources, and all the mineral resources of that great stretch of country, 1,400 miles in length from Quebec to Winnipeg.

Now, with regard to the route of this road, there were two propositions. The one proposition was to carry the road north of Lake Winnipeg. That was the route that would have been adopted by the Trans-Canada line. A good friend of mine in this House, whom I very highly esteem, thought that this line ought to have been adopted because it was 500 miles shorter than the other. Well, if there had been that difference in the distance it would have been a strong argument in favour of adopting that as the nearest route. To find the distances—but of course they are only approximative—I have calculated them by the map. I converted the geographical miles into statute miles, and made some allowance for deviation from the direct line in estimating the length, and the distances I obtained are as follows: By the Winnipeg route, from Quebec to Winnipeg, 1,380 miles; Winnipeg to Port Simpson, 1,650 miles; total, 3,030 miles. By the Nelson route, Quebec to River Nelson, 1,466 statute miles; from Nelson river to Port Simpson, 1,490 statute miles; total, from Quebec to Port Simpson, 2,956 miles. The difference of distance in favour of the northern route, north of Lake Winnipeg, is

75 miles. Now, I was surprised at this result myself. The two lines at their furthest points of divergence are three and a half degrees apart. But when you come to lay out, as I did, a sketch to ascertain the difference between the length of the hypotenuse and that of the base and the perpendicular of a triangle, it is less than one would naturally suppose. For instance, you lay out a line with a perpendicular of 400 miles and a base of 800 miles, and the hypotenuse is but a trifle more than one-fourth more than the length of the perpendicular line. So that showed this calculation was substantially correct.

Now, there is a reason why the Winnipeg route is preferable to the other. If there had been no such reason, the government would naturally have chosen the shorter line, even though the advantage to be gained was only 75 miles. But the Nelson route has less agricultural land upon it than the other. The distance is greater from Quebec to the River Nelson than it is from Quebec to Winnipeg, by about 70 miles. Then the unproductive country extends from the Nelson river west a long distance; while from Winnipeg, the productive country extends at least to the Peace River pass, and that is the reason for putting the road upon that line. Another reason is that at Quebec the road touches a point where all the business of the North-west converges, a great entrepot for the vast country west and north-west of it. It is so to-day, it will probably continue to be so, and a road reaching that point is in a position to compete for the business furnished by all these roads ramifying through the North-west in every direction, while if it had gone by the Nelson route it would have reached none of them, and could have competed for none of this business. For these reasons the choice of line by way of Winnipeg was a judicious choice.

I wish next, having dealt with physical aspects of this road, to call attention to its business prospects. We have dealt with the national question, with the necessity from a national standpoint of having a great transcontinental road upon our own soil, and it has been asserted by the hon. ex-Minister of Railways and Canals and by others, that, leaving out this view of the case, this road has nothing to commend it to us from a commercial standpoint. Well, Sir, the business prospects of this road are, first, that it will furnish an outlet to the North Saskatchewan valley, an enormous extent of country and a fertile and rich region of the Canadian North-west. It will furnish an outlet to the Athabasca valley by means of the navigation of the river bringing its produce down to the point where the road crosses and up the river to that point. It will furnish an outlet to the Peace river valley. These regions are to be peopled in the near future by millions of people, these regions are to be the heart of the productive region of the Canadian North-