

*Peace River—Railway Outlet*

as a means towards that end, the Progressive Conservative party is committed to securing the connection by rail of the Peace River country with the ports of Prince Rupert, Vancouver and New Westminster. This project is essential, not only to the areas affected and the Pacific ports, but to the future development and utilization of the great resources of this section of Canada.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I sometimes think we are very much out of date in our attitude toward the building of railways. As a people we were badly bitten twenty odd years ago when we got too much railway mileage for our population. It is quite true that we got into trouble then and that a great deal of money was lost. Through the war years we found that much of that mileage was very useful, and that the money was not all wasted. But a belief has grown up in Canada that we must be very careful about building any more railways; that it is almost a sin to mention another line of railway which should be built in this far-flung country. That, I think, is dead wrong. In that view we are out of date, far behind the times. The country cannot stand still. Canada is developing all the time; new settlements are growing up, new resources are being found, and they must be served by railways. This Peace River district should have top priority in getting a new railway line. Let us as Canadians change our thinking a bit and be prepared to build railways where they are needed.

In conclusion I should like to leave one other thought with the house. We must think of northern Canada. This country cannot attain its destiny unless the northern part of Canada is developed. At the present time nearly all settlement in Canada is within one or two hundred miles of the boundary between the United States and Canada; we have not settled in depth at all. To do that we must go north. Look at what Russia has been able to do in Siberia; yet Canada has dragged behind. We must turn our attention to northern Canada; and I do not think there is any finer place to begin than by constructing this rail outlet from the Peace River district to the Pacific coast.

Mr. McIVOR: If I may ask the hon. member a question, are there any highways there on which big trucks can transport goods?

Mr. GREEN: At the present time the British Columbia government is completing a highway into the Peace River district from the Prince Rupert line of the Canadian National.

Mr. THOMAS REID (New Westminster): In rising to speak to the motion now before the house, Mr. Speaker, let me say at the outset that it is not my intention to delay

[Mr. Green.]

the house very long. I realize, as was pointed out by the hon. member for Cariboo (Mr. Irvine), that very often over a long period of years the resolutions of private members have been talked out, and I for one would like to see this matter come to a vote to-day. Hence my remarks will be brief.

I am rising to support the motion. I think it was in 1931 that, as a new member of the house, I first listened to similar arguments being presented by the then member; and if my memory serves me aright he was told by the then Minister of Railways that the time was not ripe for the construction of this railway. That argument is used very often when a government wants to turn down something or someone is against it; they use the stock phrase that this is not the time to put such a proposal into effect. I want to say to hon. members of the house that in many provinces agricultural land is limited, and that is so in British Columbia. It is true that our province covers a large area, but actually the amount of good agricultural land is not as great as the area of the province would seem to indicate. I think it can be said without fear of successful contradiction that if at the inception the railways in British Columbia had gone right through that district, rather than down through the Fraser, we would have had a greater population in that province than we have to-day.

Just in passing may I offer one word of criticism in regard to the offer of the provincial government to returned men of a million acres of land in that country. I have said before, and I repeat, that if the provincial government would take off the strings and make that land available to all returned men, no matter from what province they come, there would not be any great difficulty in obtaining settlers in that district. This is first-class land; as the hon. member for Vancouver North (Mr. Sinclair) says, there is certainly good land up there. But I think the hon. member for Cariboo overlooked one thing in his argument; and he will realize that as an old member of the house I listened to these arguments advanced year after year before the war. My information is that a great deal of the wheat grown in that part of British Columbia matures a little too late to go out through the lakes, so the only outlet is through the Pacific coast ports. If therefore for no other reason than that, an outlet should be developed to permit the wheat to get out as speedily as possible.

When one considers the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been spent in the east, one sometimes wonders why those of