

Supply—Hudson Bay Railway

Titanic disaster had happened there the Hudson Bay route would be condemned. The island of Anticosti is dotted so thickly with wrecks that you can hardly stick a pin in the map without touching the scene of one. I have had cattle ships wrecked on that island. I know the Hudson Bay route is not anything like that. I feel absolutely satisfied that the completion of the Hudson Bay railway and the opening up of this route will give western Canada redress in the way of transportation. It is hard on live stock to rail them all the way from western Canada to Montreal or the Atlantic seaboard. That is what takes it out of them; the ship does not. By the opening of this route we will be close to a port and will be able to get our live stock aboard ship without a long rail haul, and the animals will reach the other side in much better condition. Once more, Mr. Chairman, I ask hon. members to let us have this road put into shape as quickly as possible.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Mr. Chairman, the hon. Minister of Railways, in answering a question that I addressed to him before adjournment at six o'clock, read some extracts from the report of the Senate committee in 1920 in regard to the feasibility of the Hudson Bay route. I think he knew quite well that in my question I was not discussing the feasibility of the route at all. The minister himself in making his preliminary statement said that his purpose was to spend a sufficient amount of money to test the route thoroughly. If the minister and the government are satisfied, on the basis of the Senate report of 1920, that the route is commercially feasible why is it necessary to make any further tests? Why not start now and tell parliament and the Canadian people exactly what they intend to do to make this route feasible for the transportation of the grain crops and freight traffic of the west; why is it necessary to spend money in testing a route which the minister now says, basing his conclusions on the report of the Senate committee of 1920, has already been disclosed as commercially feasible?

In 1925 the Department of the Interior issued a bulletin in relation to this very route. May I at this point, Mr. Chairman, say that I am not opposing the Hudson Bay route at all. I am not taking the position that this is not a commercial possibility as a freight route, but I do say that no attempt has ever been made to test the Hudson bay as a freight route for commercial ships. All that has been done is to take the reports of captains who have made one trip a year in

[Mr. Mullins.]

and out, and sometimes they have not been able to make that trip. These records of ice conditions have been taken and conclusions based thereon. But there is a way by which this route can be effectively tested. If the minister would spend one-half this amount of money in getting one or two ships of about 8,000 tons, properly reinforced as the engineers have recommended and in ballast if you will, in service between a St. Lawrence or Newfoundland port and Port Nelson, to see how many times they can navigate Hudson straits in one, two or three seasons, the possibility of the route would be definitely determined. Then there would be some justification for this plan by which Canada is going to be put an expenditure which will amount to \$40,000,000 or \$50,000,000 if the whole scheme is carried out.

Mr. MULLINS: Mr. Fitzgerald of the Hudson's Bay Company demonstrated 250 years ago that the route was navigable. There is no use going to an expense of that kind at all.

Mr. NICHOLSON: My hon. friend states what Mr. Fitzgerald did 250 years ago. I did not know Mr. Fitzgerald, so I cannot say whether or not he navigated the straits then. But the Department of the Interior of this government prepared and circulated a report last year with regard to the Hudson Bay route, and in that report they published the statement of Engineer McLachlan, who spent five years on that work. Surely if anyone knows the conditions obtaining there this man, who is recognized as one of our greatest engineers, should have that knowledge.

Mr. HANNESSON: Is it not a fact that Mr. McLachlan only made one trip by water?

Mr. NICHOLSON: I do not know how many trips Mr. McLachlan made by water; he was the engineer in charge and lived right at the works, and I have here his report dated September 17, 1917, addressed to Chief Engineer Bowden:

Many a time during the past four years I have been on the verge of coming out in absolute condemnation of the undertaking on which I am engaged, but so long as I thought there was a chance of the Hudson Bay railway ever proving of value for any national purpose, I thought that I had better not do so, especially as I know that you have always been one of its staunchest supporters. In the light of the ice conditions of this year, which I observed carefully on August 13, 29 and September 6, in the entrance to Port Nelson and the operation of our ships to and from Port Nelson for the past five seasons, I have come to the conclusion that the season for tramp steamships on this route is going to be so short that the cost of doing every item of work in the handling and transporting of