(*March 27*)

The West's Hinterland.

By Mr. J. K. Cornwall, M.P.P.*

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the subject, "The West's Hinterland," Mr. J. K. Cornwall, M.P.P. for the Peace River District, said:

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I will assure you that it is a very great pleasure for me to be here to-day. I am a little bit unnerved, after listening to the introduction of your President, Mr. MacKay. I did not think I was quite so distinguished a character until I heard him say it. However, I will try to live up to his estimation of my character in future. I might say that I have had some considerable assistance, from the fact that I was born in Ontario, which ought to make me good, and I have known some of Canada's greatest citizens, some of whom are here to-day. I have several times been under the guidance of Bishop Reeve, who spent years on the Canadian rivers of the North; and I have a neighbor in Archdeacon Robbins, whom I know very well, and who will endorse my character for as long as he has known me, and I think I will be looked after by Bishop Sweeny, who is here nearby.

I know you are all business men, and I am very glad for it, as it is an interesting story I have to tell—not that I tell it very well, but it is a very important story of the last part of Canada—the last free land left to the Anglo-Saxon race in North America. I desire to take you on an imaginary trip from Edmonton—the gateway of the West—over to the Mackenzie watershed and beyond. All this is known as the West, but the country of which I am speaking is here (indicating on a map), north from Edmonton to the Arctic, 3,000 miles. The Mackenzie watershed contains 3,500 miles of navigable waters, on which steamers are plying to-day in the fur trade. These rivers are going to be of tremendous advantage to that country in its development, in furnishing transportation for at

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least six months in the year—four months in the northern part and six months in the southern part. It will have to be tapped by railroads.

I will tell you of its physical resources, and give you some idea of what you have in store, after you have got through exploiting the present West, bearing in mind always that it is the Last West. Bishop Reeve spent thirty-eight years on the Mackenzie River, and he will tell you that the limit of fertile or agricultural development is probably 60 degrees latitude, which is the most northerly point of Alberta. That is about the most northerly point on which you can figure on growing very well for any commercial purpose. It has been grown farther north than that, but only in favorable places.

The lakes in that country are of tremendous extent, inland seas teeming with fish of the highest commercial value, that will be brought in when the waterways are supplemented by railroads. At the mouth of the Mackenzie River, where it enters the Arctic Ocean, the whalers of San Francisco have taken in twenty years $17,000,000 in the whale industry. Not one dollar of that has ever been of any benefit to Canada. We did not exploit that. The whalers go around through the Bering Strait. By developing this North Land you can put in whaling stations at the mouth of the Mackenzie, and, on account of the strategic advantage of having your stations on your own soil and of being able to get at them by waterways, you can get all that trade. You can take a steamer from Victoria, B.C., up around through the Arctic Ocean, and bring it to Fort Smith; and you can draw seven feet of water.

In the North country there is water-power variously estimated at between 750,000 and 1,000,000 horse-power. There are immense areas—millions and millions of acres—of pulpwood in that country. So you see what a tremendous reservoir of natural resources we have.

Some of the natural resources—I will just go briefly over them—are gold, iron ore, copper, galena, coal, oil—geologists claim that there is the greatest oil prospect in the known world. They have not found oil, but they are boring for it; it is in its infancy, but when they do find it it will be the greatest oil field in the known world. There are also deposits of salt and asphaltum in that country.

In the earlier days the rangers got the idea of range and agricultural country from following the natural habits of the buffalo. I have been from the Rio Grande to Fort Smith. I have seen the only band of wild buffaloes that we have in Canada. I have seen the only band of wild buffaloes that they

have at the Flathead reservation, that we are now buying. The great Mexican halfbreed, Pablo, is rounding them up, and we will eventually have the only buffaloes in the world. You can tell the character of a country by following the buffalo. If you find the buffalo ranging, when the snow goes off the ground you will find that the ground is fertile. The largest buffalo was killed by a Fort Smith man. It weighed 2,400 pounds, and was killed twenty miles east of Fort Smith, and that is where the last band of buffaloes in North America is ranging. They are larger in size there than the buffaloes in any other part of America. The hay is luxuriant, long, and thick, and it is a fine prairie country. Just beyond that the country changes in character. It is about the most northern point where the latitude and climatic conditions and daylight have sufficient influence to grow No. 1 hard. They are 35 minutes north of the fifty-eighth degree. Fort Vermillion is 35 miles north of the fifty-eighth degree. It is a little less than 700 miles north of the American boundary. They get on an average three crops out of five. They had frost even in Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Manitoba. There is frost sometimes in the country I speak of. As the soil is cultivated the climatic conditions change. In that country they have nineteen hours of sunlight in summer. It has the greatest length of sunlight experienced in any grain-growing country under the British flag. Grain matures more rapidly there, and the further north you grow wheat the harder it is. The Alberta Red that we hear so much about is Kansas Red. They grow it up there so long as it is safe to grow grain of that kind under certain conditions. We got our wheat from Kansas, and we made hard wheat of it. They now come from Kansas to get seed from Alberta.

Speaking about wheat, the first man to plant anything in this country was named Peter Pond. He went into that country in 1776—the year of the Battle of Bunker Hill. He planted wheat near Fort Chippewan, among other things. One hundred years afterwards, when they were celebrating their independence by a great centennial at Philadelphia, the wheat that took the first prize was raised at Fort Chippewan.

Now as to the climatic conditions. Since we were afflicted with the poem, "Our Lady of the Snows," by Rudyard Kipling, we have had to defend our climate. Prior to that it was supposed to be all right. You have defended it successfully. I have got here two very fine specimens of how you thrive in that country. Bishop Reeve lived for thirty-eight years up there, and if there is a finer looking man physically I would

like to see him. The climate is a very, very fine one. It is cold in winter. We did have a cold winter this year, but we thrived under it; and the farther north you live the better and hardier man you are physically.

Between the Missouri and the Saskatchewan there are six transcontinental railways. Betwen the Saskatchewan and the Athabaska there is one under course of construction. This district (Peace River), on account of the great natural resources, between the Athabaska and Peace River, will sustain two transcontinental roads just as easy—in fact, easier—and will pay quicker than the original C. P. R. paid, because we have a better country.

There has recently died in England a very distinguished soldier and traveller—Sir William Butler—a man whom, I think, was very distinguished for three reasons. He made a trip through that North country in 1870, and when he came back he gave it as his opinion that the country north of the Saskatchewan River would sustain a greater population than the country south of it. See what importance there is to the fact, outside of the fact that I agree with it! He was the first man to call our attention and the attention of the Mother Country to the fact that they should settle the Alaska boundary at once, in 1870. He was a pretty smart man to see it at that time. They did not do it, consequently we were "Alverstoned." You remember that, don't you? Sir William Butler was in charge of the troops in South Africa when the war broke out. He gave it as his opinion that the British Government would need 250,000 men to settle the war. They paid no attention to his remarks, further than to recall him. But he was right. These remarks are just to evidence that his opinion should be taken for something, and he said that the country north of the Saskatchewan would support a greater population than the country south of it.

That country is commencing to receive a certain amount of notice from settlers. There are no great railroads there yet, so you see what we have in store for you in the development of that country. They have proved that wheat can successfully be grown in the country south of 60 degrees. This winter saw the most spectacular trek ever experienced in any country. From the day when Esau, in Biblical times, started out to "hit the trail," in search of a home, down to the present time, there has been no more spectacular trek. There was witnessed there hundreds and hundreds of families leaving Edmonton, with houses on sleighs, wives

and families, and going off into the country five, six, or seven hundred miles beyond the railroad. What kind of people are these? I am sure the Archdeacon will be glad to know. These people organized themselves into little bands, and decided they would settle in the same locality. I was very busy all winter; I was on tap all the time. I was giving these people advice, and trying to tell them where to go.

If I answered it once I answered it a thousand times the question as to school districts. A very remarkable thing, these people would go down to the Government office and get all the documents in order to properly organize a school district. They would be told how to do it—found out where to sign their name, got all that right, and got it in their pockets—before they saw the country or picked out their homestead. The people have gone out there with the stuff they require in order to have a school district; that is the character of the people going into that country. Before these people had built their homes, and during the time they were in the bush for timber to build their houses, each man cut five or six logs towards the erecting of school-houses, before he builds himself a home to cover the heads of his wives—no Mormons out there—before he cuts the logs to cover the heads of his loved ones—I am bound to stick to that, and I am afraid you gentlemen will get suspicious of me; there is nothing in it—I am only married once. However, I think I have gone over it very roughly—a fairly rough synopsis and outline of what the country is.

There are 100,000,000 acres of land north of the Saskatchewan River capable of the same development and productiveness as all that land west of the Red River, between the Red River and the foothills—a hundred million acres, that I have told you about. And it means a great deal to you people here, because you have got another West to exploit; but bear in mind it is last, and it is the best, if I do say it myself. My opinion has been borne out by every man that ever visited it. And be not without hope. You may have your little trouble about reciprocity, but look at the millions and millions of acres of fertile land awaiting to be developed.

A Member—How about the rainfall?

Mr. Cornwall—We have sufficient rainfall there, coupled with two feet of snow, that makes it capable of growing advantageously. There is less dry weather there than in southern Alberta and Dakota.

Now, if there is any other question anybody would like to ask?

A Member—What is the average yield of grain?

Mr. Cornwall—Twenty-five bushels No. 1 hard wheat.

A Member—What weight to the bushel?

Mr. Cornwall—Sixty-six, sixty-seven, or sixty-eight pounds.

A Member—Would it be a grazing country?

Mr. Cornwall—A great mixed farming country.

A Member—Any people up there?

Mr. Cornwall—Two thousand.

A Member—What denomination?

Mr. Cornwall—All kinds, principally English Church.

A Member—Any coal?

Mr. Cornwall—Lots of it.

A Member—What kind?

Mr. Cornwall—Lignite; some bituminous.

A Member—What kind of fish?

Mr. Cornwall—Whitefish and trout.

The Great Prairie country is about one hundred miles square, rolling and undulating, and the lakes and rivers are very beautiful. And, here on the north side of the Peace River, is a grand prairie country, which is all capable and fit for cultivation. The Peace River is navigable for 500 miles, and will play a very important part in the transportation. There are three very great water-powers—one is at Vermillion Chutes and another at Smith's Falls. Copper is found over in the Great Bear Lake country; also iron ore. Galena is found along the Buffalo River. All these lakes are teeming with fish of the highest commercial value. The rivers are open for navigation from four to five months in the year. The great need of the country is men, money, and transportation—that's why I am here. We need railroads, and in a small way you may be an instrument in getting the railroad we need. We want it, and if you can help us to get a railroad you will be doing yourselves and the country a great service—a service that every man ought to be proud to be able to render.

At the present time there is no railroad much north of Edmonton. The Canadian Northern contemplate building a road, and the Grand Trunk Pacific and the C. P. R. all have plans to build into this country. The C. P. R. intend to build a high-level bridge at Edmonton. There are about sixty miles of grading, and there will be steel at Athabaska Landing next fall.

Navigation on the rivers is not continuous; and, while there are 3,500 miles of navigable water, they are broken by falls and rapids in three notable places.

To show you a comparison, I will quote you figures from a blue book. I know you are more or less in this country "from Missouri"—that is the way we figure—but here are some figures concerning a country in the same latitude as the Peace River country:

Tobolsk, in Siberia, is a smaller province in the same latitude. It has a population of 1,656,700, and raised in 1907 12,000,000 bushels of wheat, 4,000,000 bushels of rye, besides large quantities of barley and oats. There were in 1901 3,104,800 head of live stock—all this in a country which is really one hundred miles north of Edmonton. It exported from one district 19,711,446 pounds of butter to England in 1902. That is from Asiatic Russia. The Overseas Club ought to make a note of it. These figures are obtained from a blue book of the Board of Trade, and absolutely authentic.

That is what they have been able to do in Asiatic Russia, where they have somewhat the same soil and the same climatic conditions; and, before I close, may I ask: What are you going to do about it?