

Plea for Extension of West Coast Road From Sproat Lake to Tofino

By GERTRUDE JACKSON

Extension of the present Island Highway from Alberni to the West Coast should be a project of great concern to British Columbia, and especially to Victoria and Vancouver. Why? Because of its economic promises; and when its possibilities are thoroughly understood it will engage the attention of every thinking citizen. The intention of the writer, who has access to reliable data, is to present so fair a view of these possibilities as to make them probabilities.

WEST COAST DEFINED

When we who live in the district speak of the West Coast we mean that portion of Vancouver Island from Barkley Sound to Cape Cook, a distance of more than one hundred and fifty miles, which includes twelve miles of the famous Long Beach.

This road will open up commercially Alberni Canal, Barkley, Nootka, Clayoquot and Kyoquot Sounds. A reference to a map will show that these sounds include several hundred miles of inland waterways. The West Coast fisheries play a large part in British Columbia's production. On the West Coast last year there were twenty-three fish reduction plants operating, which handled 81,740 tons of fresh pilchards, producing 4,035,879 gallons of oil and 15,280 tons of meal. The industries benefiting from this road would include fish reduction plants, salmon canneries, sawmills, mines, and innumerable other businesses that are operating in this territory. At the present time every activity is retarded by the lack of transportation.

ROADS BADLY NEEDED

The actual and immediate benefit to be derived from the construction of this proposed road would be the

possession of the means of a rapid transit for men and materials, which is at present unprovided for. For example, a ton of fish caught at daybreak in Barkley Sound or Clayoquot Sound could be delivered in Victoria or Vancouver in twelve hours; sixteen hours from Nootka; or twenty hours from Kyoquot Sound. This road would save ten hours' run for a carrier from Clayoquot to Port Alberni, which is five or six hours from the Coast cities. Surely this means something.

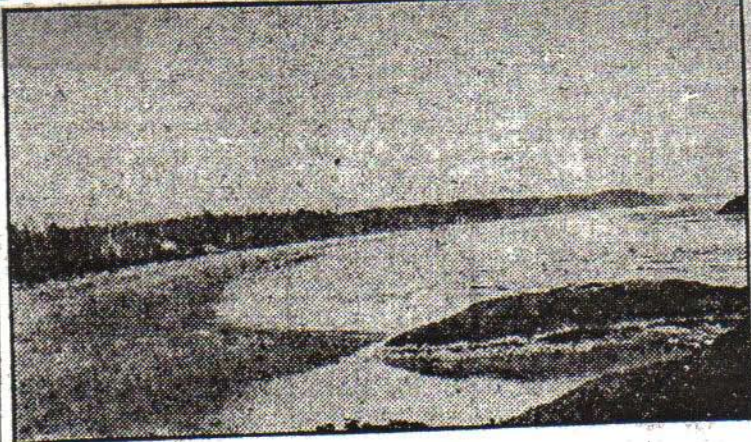
At the present time communication is restricted to three boats a month. Where in Canada is there a district possessing a population of from three to four thousand, as this district, with only a mail service every ten days? Is it not time that some action was taken?

Do we realize the wonderful natural resources that are to be found on the West Coast of this Island? This district is rich in timber; cedar, fir, balsam, hemlock and spruce, all as yet untouched.

MINES UNDEVELOPED

The mines are undeveloped, but many promising locations have been made and reported on by the Department of Mines. Kennedy River (Elk River in local parlance), as traversed by the proposed road, has indications of rich gold and copper ores, all awaiting technical examination, which at present are very difficult to reach. Several gold claims have been staked, despite the lack of transportation, the samples assaying \$26 gold and \$1.50 silver to the ton. More will be heard of the old Wreck Bay placers, where thousands and thousands of dollars' worth of gold was taken out over thirty years ago, and that are still being worked. But where is the mother lode?

Fisheries, mines and timber are



At Long Beach

the undisputed assets of the West Coast, but there is one more, greater than these because it can never be exhausted by the hand of man; it is that twelve miles of hard white sand between Tofino and Ucluelet known as Long Beach, or Long Bay on the map.

FAMOUS LONG BEACH

Long Beach is unequalled. There is not another beach approaching it in dimensions and character of its surface and background anywhere on the Pacific Coast from Mexico to Alaska. There is excellent authority for this. Undoubtedly there are many fine beaches in all these miles of shoreline, but nowhere else can there be found twelve miles of clean hard sand free from all obstacles, and from one hundred to one thousand feet wide according to the tides. The slope of the beach seaward is nearly flat. At one mile from shore the depth of the water is only ten fathoms, it being six miles to the twenty fathom mark, with an absolute absence of undertow along the entire beach.

When you consider that the whole Pacific Ocean is in front of you, incessantly pounding on the beach, its hardness is explained as well as its freedom from boulders. Automob-

iles at forty or fifty miles an hour leave scarcely an imprint on the sand. What possibilities when made accessible by road.

TOWNSITE SELECTED

The surf makes boat-landing almost impossible on the beach, but at the western end there are three small islands and here, when it is calm, small boats can anchor and a landing made in a canoe. At this end there is a small townsite subdivision named Nesawesta, owned by local residents who have disposed of lots for Summer homes, but owing to the lack of transportation the building has been retarded.

There is a road from Ucluelet to Tofino, a distance of twenty-five miles, which makes use of six miles of the sand of Long Beach on its course. Cars can pass the entire twenty-five miles, but only six miles of the Ucluelet end are surfaced at present. This road will have no real value until connected with the Island Highway.

This projected extension deserves large public support, partly for the immense development of trade as outlined, and partly for the immense increase in tourist traffic that a good road would provide and permit. Where is the tourist going in a few years if the travel continues to increase in the future as it has done in the past? Long Beach will accommodate thousands where our other beaches can only serve hundreds.

FEW DIFFICULTIES

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From Alberni there is a good road to Great Central Lake. The new road would leave the highway about seven miles out, following the north shore of Sproat Lake to Taylor Arm and up Taylor Arm to Taylor River. Six miles up the river to Sutton Creek a bridge of 120 feet would be required. Then up the Sutton Creek to the divide and down the pass to Kennedy River, five miles. The elevation above the level of Sproat Lake is 150 feet, the summit being 790 feet, while the crossing of Taylor River is about 450 feet.

The route through Sutton Pass offers no great difficulties in construction. Coming down to Kennedy River another bridge of the same span as Taylor River would cross the east fork, and four miles further the north fork would be crossed by a span one-half the size. The route then follows the river, with only small creeks to cross at an easy grade to Kennedy Lake.

BEAUTIFUL SCENERY

Part of the road will run through long stretches of open flats for many miles where there is just underbrush to clear; part of it would include majestic scenery of canyons and gorges. The mountains are very steep and reach an elevation of 4,000 feet on the left side and 3,000 feet on the right side. The east shore of the lake would be followed for another ten miles, leaving the lake about six miles from Long Beach.

From Sproat Lake to Long Beach by the proposed route the distance would be about thirty-nine miles. The road between Sproat Lake and Kennedy Lake offers no engineering difficulties, the grades will be easy and the cost of construction not excessive, it being estimated to cost \$10,000 per mile. It is reported that gravel is available all along the route in any grade or quantity.

GAME PLENTIFUL

Judging from the reports of those who have seen Long Beach and had glimpses of the route between the two lakes, it is the scenic beauty that will be the paramount lure when this road is built. If we compare the popularity and business value of other beaches, Long Beach will surpass them if only given a chance.

For visitors the diversions and amusements at Long Beach are many and it could become a most popular Summer resort with golf, horseback riding, motor racing, as well as hunting, hiking, boating and

surfboard riding, the latter providing a thrill that is hard to excel.

For hunting and picture taking this district cannot be surpassed. All the animals and game birds that are common to Vancouver Island are found here, while one of the three bands of elk that are known on the Island makes its home on the shore of Kennedy Lake.

MUCH MARINE LIFE

Unquestionably the most interesting thing of all to the tourist, and especially is this true of our Island visitors, is the sea life that can be seen at Long Beach. One of the most talked-of attractions at the beach is the wonderful marine gardens that are to be seen among the reefs at low tide. As one visitor puts it:

"Here among the crevices of the rocks are clear deep pools prolific with sea life; here it is interesting to ponder on what we might call the miracle of color in nature; in all her manifestations of beauty, there is none to excel, to my mind, the opulent coloring of these pools which are washed at high tide by the long Pacific rollers."

MANY VISIT BEACH

In spite of the inadequacy of the transportation in the past, Long Beach has had many visitors, some walking thirty miles in order to see what others had told them of. One cannot see Long Beach in storm or in calm without enthusiasm. One writer in my visitors' book breaks out into the following verse:

"A thousand leagues of ocean
roll in haste
This splendid goal of gleaming
sand to reach,
In order that my famished soul
might taste
The magic fascination of the
beach."

We on Vancouver Island should become more conscious that the West Coast is part of British Columbia; that we have commercial possibilities, natural resources and scenic beauty on this coast of ours equal to that of any place in Canada. Why should our money and tourists go away when we have so much to be proud of at home?