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THE NATIONAL RAILWAYS.

Sir Henry Thornton, Chairman of the new National Railway Board, and Sir Joseph Flavelle, retiring Chairman of the Grand Trunk Board, agree in presenting a cheerful view of the present year's operation of the National System. Sir Joseph says: "We seem to have passed the first milestone. There will be no operating loss during the current year. The combined revenues of the National and Grand Trunk Systems will meet the combined operating charges, and will leave a substantial surplus to be applied toward the fixed charges." Sir Henry says: "We shall do materially better this year than in previous years, and will more than meet operating expenses." The time when the railways cease to be a drain on the public purse "may not be so far distant as most people imagine."

To have overcome the operating deficit is a great achievement, giving ground for hope that the consolidation of the railways, the economies to be thereby effected, and the increase of business may in the not very distant future result in the railways paying their way in the full sense. Sir Joseph Flavelle says that when this is accomplished the country will have a salable asset, and can then dispose of it if it so desires. But if under public management the deficits caused by private management are removed and the system rendered self-sustaining the country will not be eager to get rid of the asset which it will have obtained, and hand it over to a private concern which will have no interest in acquiring it except to earn dividends to be provided by the customers of the railways. What has been said about political interference deserves the most serious consideration. The Government must give the Board the support and protection from interference which it has promised. Sir Henry Thornton and his colleagues cannot be held responsible unless they have a free hand to manage the railway on business principles. They cannot be expected to make the system a successful competitor with the C.P.R. unless they have the same power and freedom as Mr. Beatty, and his associates, of the C.P.R. Sir Henry Thornton says:

Perhaps no less dangerous than political interference is what may be called pernicious sectional pride. The Dominion covers a wide territory, and the aspirations and desires of different sections are not always identical. Indeed, from time to time, they may even conflict. It will be my conscientious effort to meet the reasonable demands of all sections of the Dominion and contribute to the utmost to their development. It must be obvious to anyone that, while recognizing in full sympathy the requirements of all sections of the Dominion, the National Railways as a whole cannot be sacrificed to meet the wishes of any part of the Dominion.

While every part of Canada ought to have justice, there must be developed a Canadian spirit, a national pride in the undertaking which will prevent the making of unreasonable local demands incompatible with the national welfare. The railway is ours, and every Canadian should deem it his patriotic duty to work for its success.