

within or without the precincts of the caucus he is the leader so far as this question and some others are concerned, and the party dances to his music. My hon. friend (Mr. W. F. Maclean) is a stalwart. He has taken a bold plunge into the cold water of state socialism. But my hon. friend the leader of the party is not so advanced, if we may judge him by his utterances. He does not approve, yet he does not condemn and repudiate; and whilst my hon. friend from South York (Mr. W. F. Maclean) is splashing about in mid-stream, my hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) is on the bank, now and then thrusting a timid foot into the cold water, but promptly withdrawing it, and unable to make up his mind either to go in or stay out.

So far as the question of government ownership of railways is concerned, my hon. friend's utterances have been singularly inconclusive and elusive. He has said enough to give hope to the ardent, the enthusiast, the unthinking, but he has tried to avoid committing himself absolutely. And in order that I may not do an injustice to my hon. friend by giving my own version of his speeches let me quote the words of the Halifax speech, the one in which this platform was announced. I will quote from the report in the Halifax 'Herald':

Whether or not state ownership and operation of railways can be made a success in Canada remains to be determined. State ownership is repeatedly challenged because of incompetent or corrupt administration, and there does not seem to be much argument against it. Let us not forget that all private enterprises afford instances of failure or incapacity. The denial of our capacity to operate successfully a great public railway from the Atlantic to the Pacific seems no less than the denial of our capacity for self-government. Shall all private enterprises be condemned because of business failure or corrupt methods? Are we to renounce our right of self-government because of repeated acts of maladministration, because of political graft, because of Saskatchewan valley land deals and grazing lease scandals? And last, but not least, are we to hand over our government railways to private corporations because their management has been very greatly discredited?

Speaking for myself, I believe that state ownership is no more to be condemned for error of administration than is the general principle of self-government. The remedy is to amend the methods.

Now, Sir, if this language means anything it simply means that government ownership is a sound principle which ought to be adopted by the party and by the country, as it has already been adopted by the hon. member for South York. If this language carried any weight, if it carried conviction, then such was the conclusion of those who heard it; but such was not the conclusion of him who spoke. After he had given a plethora of arguments in favour of government ownership, after he had stated

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that 'the denial of our capacity to operate successfully a great public railway from the Atlantic to the Pacific seems no less than the denial of our capacity of self-government'; after he had stated that 'speaking for myself he believed that state ownership is no more to be condemned for errors of administration than is the general principle of self-government'—when he had reached that climax, when he had soared almost to the sun, suddenly his pinions gave way, suddenly his heart sank within him. And what was his conclusion? Was it government ownership? Not at all, but simply that the Intercolonial railway should be put under a commission. And for that I will quote the very language of my hon. friend. After having given these preliminary arguments, this is the conclusion of the Halifax platform:

We stand for the operation and management of our railways by an independent commission, free from partisan control or interference.

Is this all that was expected by those hon. gentlemen supporting him and applauding him? Was that all the hon. gentleman was ready to commit himself to? Yes, that was as far as he intended to go. But in this instance, as in the other instance he wanted to please all parties; he made an argument for the hon. member for South York (Mr. W. F. Maclean), and drew a conclusion for the member for West Toronto (Mr. Osler). But my hon. friend should not forget that he who sows the wind will reap the whirlwind, and he has already reaped the whirlwind. It is vain for him to attempt to confine himself to the conclusion of his own arguments. The stalwarts of the party, the hon. member for East York and his friends, simply brush aside his restrictions and claim that the policy of the party is that of government ownership. Well, Sir, whether my hon. friend is willing or not, that is the position in which he has placed himself. Let him examine the Toronto 'World,' and he will find that he is commended every day for a policy, not the policy which he advocated, but the policy which the member for South York advocates. And so, willingly or unwillingly, kicking and resisting my hon. friend to find himself carried forward in the strong arms of the hon. member for South York. We read of some savage tribes who force their leaders to the front, even when their mature judgment would prevent them from risking a battle and a defeat.

But this matter is too serious to allow of any equivocation. It is better that we should know where we stand on this question, and what is the policy of all parties with respect to it. Sir, there is a tendency in this country at the present time, a tendency which did not originate in this country but which came from the other side of the line where it originated in the Populist