

Toronto Star

081473
Mon. Oct. 16/22

Hanna and Thornton

Mr. D. B. Hanna retires from the presidency of the Canadian National Railways with his reputation enhanced by the success of his management. Although Mr. Hanna and the retiring board of directors did not have an opportunity to incorporate the G. T. R. into the general system, they made considerable progress in merging the Canadian Northern, the G. T. Pacific, and the Intercolonial, doing away with a great deal of duplication of services. So much has been accomplished in this way that hopes are well founded for the doing of a great deal more of it with profit and advantage to the national service when the G. T. R. has been thoroughly absorbed and knitted into the general fabric.

For the past three or four years Mr. Hanna and his board of directors have handled a very big and a very difficult business with a measure of success that is gratifying to those who believe that public ownership of transportation is the policy of the future. The country, in welcoming the new management, is not unaware of the services given by those who now retire from control.

Since the change of government at Ottawa it has been definitely known that there would be new management. The new government was pledged to make a complete change. But Premier King took his time about it. The task of setting up a new management was a difficult one, so difficult that opponents of the government were unable to see where or how new men could be found who would be satisfactory to the country. The opponents of the government and those opposed to the nationalization of the railways awaited, with lively expectation, the naming of the new men.

This much is certain, the uproar that had been planned to burst forth when the new management was announced fizzled, sputtered and came to nothing.

Nobody had thought of the possibility that the government might secure Sir Henry Thornton as the man to take charge. The critics could see no railway man in Canada whom the government could select with a reputation big enough to impress the public with his suitability for the post. Nor could they see any sizable railway man in Canada against whom it could not be charged that he had "leanings" towards one or other of the private railway corporations.

Yet, if the government, deterred by these considerations, did not place a Canadian in charge of the National Railways, would a man be brought from the United States to rule over us? The opponents of the government were certain that the Canadian people would never, never submit to that. Of course both the C. P. R. and the G. T. R. had done this in the past, but it was felt—or it was said—the country would not stand for that sort of thing now, not with a nation-owned service. So, as North American railroading is a peculiar and highly specialized business, it looked as if the government were in a tight corner.

The critics forgot Sir Henry Thornton. But the government didn't. Thornton was a successful American railway man who was taken to England eight years ago to undertake big work there. He has made a success of everything he has touched, knows English railroading as well as American, is a British subject, and likes the job of taking charge of the Canadian National Railways and welding them into a smooth-running and successful system. His appointment rather upset the calculations of the critics. They stood ready to split the skies with protests if "a rank outsider" were appointed. But here is an outsider of rank, and that particular trained chorus which meant to do the shouting fell silent.

MEIGHEN PAPERS, Series 3 (M.G. 26, I, Volume 135)

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