

Mr. STEWART: With regard to the branch lines, the Canadian National Railway Board will make a recommendation to the government when they think a project is feasible or necessary. The same thing will apply to the Hudson Bay railway, that is, that no recommendation would come to the government from the Canadian National Railway Board until they thought that was a necessary project to go on with?

Sir HENRY THORNTON: Unless the government ask us to take that question up and give them a report on it.

Mr. STEWART: May I ask this. Would you think, as head of the Canadian National Board, that it was of sufficient importance to make inquiry or investigation into, unless the government gave you certain instructions along that line?

Sir HENRY THORNTON: That is a pretty difficult question to answer. You see, in discussing this whole Hudson Bay railway proposition, it has become so highly contentious and there are so many differences of opinion that one wants to be very careful what one says about it. We all know perfectly well that, broadly speaking, the west is convinced that the Hudson Bay railway should be built. There is a contrary opinion elsewhere, and the curious thing about it is that those who either favour or disfavour the proposition are very violent in their opinions. It seems to be either a feast or a famine, either way, and I do not think I would want to say anything about the Hudson Bay railway at all until I am put in the position and armed with the necessary authority, if such should come about, to make a report or give some form of statement.

Mr. STEWART: That is very well, but you have very carefully avoided the direct question.

Sir HENRY THORNTON: I have. This thing is loaded.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: I am not going to evade it, and I do not care whether it is loaded or not. I know what the real convictions of the Board are, and we had a similar instance in Ontario.

Sir HENRY THORNTON: You mean the Railway Board?

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: Yes.

Sir HENRY THORNTON: I do not think our Board has expressed any opinion.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: I think I know pretty well the opinion of your Board; one can see through a glass window. We had in Ontario a similar situation; that is, the building of the James Bay railway. Ontario thought that line should be built for years, and the Dominion was not going to do anything with it. Finally Ontario took it up and built it. The western provinces are a unit that this line should be built, just like Ontario was a unit that the James Bay line ought to be built. What I would favour doing is giving the whole of this investment of \$25,000,000 to the prairie provinces.

The CHAIRMAN: They will not take it.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: That is one test of sincerity, but I would do more.

Mr. STEWART: I would not be too sure about that, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: I have had that reply from men to whom that suggestion has been made.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: I think they are quite sincere enough to take it, but I would do more than that. I would arrange with them so that they would have the use of the Winnipeg terminals for the purposes of their business, and not be put to the expense of spending a lot of money for that, and I would do even more than that. I would give them, in addition, a couple of million dollars to go ahead with, so long as it was quite clear that the responsibility for that line and its resulting deficits would not be the business of the Dominion but would be the business of those who believed in it, and that would be making a pretty fair offer.