

The Address—Mr. Putnam

that degree of independence which would be commensurate with his station in life, based upon the ordinary standards of Canadian citizenship. That, Mr. Speaker, gives me comfort, and it gives comfort to thousands of deserving railway men throughout this country. The life of the railway employee is a laborious and a hazardous one, and when he is performing an honest day's work; when by the sweat of his brow he does his part in the building up of our transportation facilities, he should not have to worry about the question whether his wages will be sufficient to maintain in decency and in comfort the little family which God has committed to his care. I say it is a consoling utterance, an utterance which, though made by Sir Henry Thornton soon after his arrival in this country, was overdue to the railway employees of Canada. It should have come sooner, from some one in authority to speak, because the smaller paid railway men have been more than once placed under the threat and the execution of slashes and cuts in their pay, producing a state of doubt whether a bare living would remain for them and their dependents. Deficit or surplus, that must stop. I give this government praise for having restored to their proper status and their proper seniority those employees of the Grand Trunk Railway Company who, for a grievance which they undoubtedly considered just, went on strike away back in 1910. During the course of the last election campaign the Prime Minister promised that, the Grand Trunk railway being under government sponsorship, he would use his influence to have that grievance remedied. I congratulate the Prime Minister and his cabinet upon the vindication of the promise made in that respect. It is an earnest of the fair play which the railway employees may expect in all parts of this country.

There is another order promulgated by Sir Henry Thornton with which I agree; he has rescinded the order of the old board providing that any railway employee who responded to his legitimate ambition or to the desire of his fellow men that he should become a member of a provincial or the federal parliament, would thereby become subject to dismissal. The rescinding of that order was a proper measure of reform. I know there will be academic and technical critics who will say, "Oh, if you are going to extend that principle you will have difficulty; there will be an incongruous condition if other federal officials are not allowed to run for parliament." In all these matters, Mr. Speaker, we must not forget to be practical. The rail-
[Mr. Putnam.]

way men are in constant and close touch with the commercial conditions of the country. If I want to inquire how business is, how trade is, I ask a railway man of my own town and he can tell me. If the railway employees, segregated as they are for the most part in large centres, choose to take advantage of this new order promulgated by Sir Henry Thornton, I am very certain that even this House—looking at the matter from the point of view of ability and public service, will be the gainer.

Mention is made in the Speech of a proposal to examine into an alleged combine in shipping on the Great Lakes. In view of the fact that the Speech suggests that there may be a combine, without dogmatically saying so, it will perhaps be as well to reserve judgment on that point. It is significant, however, that at a time when competition in tonnage was very keen and difficulty was found in getting business of any profitable sort, the fresh water freight rates did multiply themselves two and three times. It is exasperating to our western friends that they should have to put up with that sort of parasite upon the economic body. I can only hope that the probe will be thorough—as I believe it will—and if there are combines and if there can legitimately be brought into force means to punish the grafters, I hope that a mere finding will not be the end of it, but that a salutary punishment will follow. Let us prevent that sort of thing, I care not from what quarter it may come.

It is a matter of such universal approval, Mr. Speaker, that the embargo upon live beef cattle going to England from this country has been removed that I would not be justified in dealing with the matter at any considerable length. I know that strong friends of the farming industry in this country have lived and died despairing that this reform would ever come about. I myself was brought up on a farm and from the earliest days of my youth I heard this question agitated. I know that this House and the country are prepared to extend their thanks to those two illustrious ministers who were in Europe at that time, and who, when this matter was being dealt with, took occasion to be in London. Some may say that their presence had nothing to do with the result; I am not prepared to say dogmatically that it had. But I am prepared to affirm that these ministers took care to be on the job in case they might be able, by offering arguments or submitting data, to turn the balance in this important matter in favour of the Dominion. For our agricultural friends I only hope that the benefits will be as substantial