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The Situation Is Clear.

Sir Henry Thornton has come out into the open in regard to building Hydro radial lines in districts where they will compete with existing National lines. The attacks that have been leveled at him made it desirable that he should state his case clearly.

Sir Henry's case can be summarized in a few of his own words:

That the very existence of Hydro radials between Toronto and the Niagara frontier, Toronto and Cobourg, or Toronto and any other point where they would more or less parallel National lines would force those radials into competition with the Nationals whether this might be the intention of those who are planning them or not.

That the Canadian National has no intention of selling at the present time any of its electric lines in Ontario, but intends to use them as a part of the whole system in order to get the greatest possible amount of traffic.

Taking the particular section around which controversy centers just now, Cobourg to Toronto, Hamilton, St. Catharines and other points, President Thornton makes it so clear that it is impossible to misunderstand his meaning, that he will look upon Hydro lines tapping that district as direct competitors of the National system, and will take steps to meet that competition just the same as he would were it coming from any private competing company.

If Hydro lines are placed in a district where the National is established, they must get out after all the business that is offering, local and through traffic, freight and passenger trade, etc. This would not be a matter of preference, but of business necessity. We would find solicitors of Hydro lines and solicitors of National lines in the offices of the same manufacturing and distributing concerns, actively competing for available business, each being compelled by the laws of competition to get right down to brass tacks and make the best bid possible.

Can we, for one minute, imagine the C. P. R. doing any such thing? Can we picture that well-handled organization having its solicitors competing with each other? That is exactly what it means to have a Hydro radial line competing with a National line, for the people would own them both.

Sir Henry Thornton was not brought to Canada to sell out the electric lines now owned by the people, unless he finds it very much to his advantage to do so. He came here to run the National Railways on a business basis for the people of Canada, the proprietors of the system, and if he is to be turned aside from that purpose by a threat of powers which the Hydro radials claim as their sacred reserves, then he is not the man for the job.

There are desperate efforts being made to show that the Thornton idea is a big blow, craftily designed, launched at the principle of public ownership. By no stretch of the imagination can public ownership smothering be read into it at all. It is a case of public ownership development. It would be just as reasonable to raise the cry that Hydro radials are aiming to smash the National lines because they plan to build a transportation system that will certainly be a competitor with the National lines.

Sir Henry Thornton has performed a good public service in thus plainly stating the case from the standpoint of the management of the National lines. If he sees fit to electrify certain sections of the line then it is his duty to go ahead and electrify. He can take it for granted that the people are not going to harass him by putting down competing lines.

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