

Thornton
Special

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NO GENERAL CUT IN FREIGHT RATES SAYS THORNTON

Asserts Maritime Provinces Will
Receive Every Possible Con-
sideration and Sympathy.

HALIFAX, N.S., Dec. 13.—Sir Henry Thornton, president of the Canadian National Railway, speaking at a banquet tendered him tonight by the Halifax City Council and Board of Trade, said that since coming to the Maritime Provinces he had a growing impression that there was a feeling not of pessimism or discouragement, but of disappointment, a feeling that perhaps, through circumstances which could not be controlled possibly, the Maritime Provinces had not enjoyed the prosperity which was their due. He could only say in regard to this that those charged with the administration of the Canadian National Railway proposed to join hands with the Maritimes to calmly, rationally and thoroughly investigate their problems. He would like to speak more definitely but his experience as a railway man had taught him the motto "safety first."

Referring to the Maritime railway claims arising out of Confederation, Sir Henry said that whatever that bargain might have been it would be his wish to see that it was honorably carried out.

Sir Henry said that the burden on the taxpayers of the Dominion could not be relieved by any general reduction in freight rates; rather he would prefer that it should be done by increasing the volume of traffic.

Addressing himself to Maritime railway problems, Sir Henry said in part:

"Some allusion has been made to the advantages of the city of Halifax as a headquarters of the National Railway System, and the malady is both universal and chronic. The city of Montreal was first in the field—and by no means backward. The city of Toronto almost moved me to tears, and last Monday night I had the privilege of hearing the same thing from the lips of the citizens of Belleville, Ont."

"I have had a growing impression since I entered the Maritime Provinces that there was no discouragement here, not despair, and not pessimism, but withal, somehow, amongst you, in the minds of all of you, there was a feeling of disappointment, a feeling that perhaps through circumstances which could not be controlled possibly, through the working out of our transportation system or for other reasons, there is a feeling in your minds that the Maritime Provinces have not fully enjoyed that prosperity which you think is your due. I say that while you have that feeling it is in no sense indicative of discouragement or despair; and I believe that in your hearts you have that patriotic optimism which would lead you to co-operate with anyone or with any institution that desired to help you."

"I would like to speak much more definitely than my knowledge or experience permits me to speak, but as a railwayman, I have much regard for that famous motto, "Safety first." I realize to purchase popularity by a wholesale reduction in freight rates would not be in the best interests of the Dominion of Canada as a whole. My first problem is to try and relieve the burden of the taxpayers of the Dominion, try to make our railways self-supporting. I cannot do that if there is going to be any general reduction in freight rates; rather, I should prefer to try to accomplish it by increasing the volume of traffic, but let me assure you that any community such as yours, which has a claim for consideration in the matter of freight rates, will receive every possible sympathy. You have indicated that years ago an honorable bargain was entered into between the Dominion of Canada and the Maritime Provinces. Whatever that bargain may have been certainly it would be my wish that it should be honorably carried out, because no government, no institution, and no people can hope for progress and success unless all of their actions are based upon the highest principles of honor."

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