

Thornton
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PRESIDENT THORNTON'S ULTIMATUM.

President THORNTON's railway address in Montreal was more than an address; it was an ultimatum. It was an ultimatum, couched in the strongest language that after-dinner politeness would permit, and served upon all whom it might concern—we may feel sure that it especially concerned St. James street—that politics, patronage, and Government and political interference, will not be tolerated by President THORNTON in his conduct of our railways.

President THORNTON, it seems to THE JOURNAL, spoke like a man without too much confidence in promises given him that public ownership was to have a "fair trial." He seemed to be anxious to make the politicians understand that he took it for granted that they meant what they said, that he would permit no technicalities to qualify their meaning, and that he was calling upon the public as an umpire, to make them live up to their pledge.

All of which is to the good. THE JOURNAL has always given Mr. MACKENZIE KING credit for sincerity in his "fair trial" promise, but we confess to a different feeling in respect of some of his colleagues. Sir HENRY THORNTON, we fancy, entertains similar doubts. He may have all the trust in the world in Mr. KING, but he is too acute not to perceive that there is a strong anti-public ownership wing in the Ministry, and that, under our system of Government, by which one hand of the Cabinet frequently does not know what the other hand is about, a "fair trial" promise might easily degenerate into a mere mask for interference of political and other character that might prohibit a public ownership success. One has but to recall Senator DANDURAND's amazing speech to Quebec electors—in which, as a member of the Government, he sought to rally Quebec to put down public ownership—or the recent pamphlet circulated by Liberals in the riding of Lanark—when Government railway contracts were promised the riding in the event of a Liberal victory—to realize the danger.

Sir HENRY THORNTON is arming himself against this peril. He has received a promise of non-interference from the Government; he has served notice upon it that he expects it to keep the letter and the spirit of its word; and he has called the public as a witness to what he has been promised and expects.

Henceforward, President THORNTON will be judged by results alone. He takes over the National lines at a time when as he generously admits the spade-work has been done, when operating deficits are giving way to surpluses, when practical evidence has been produced that nationalization can be made a success. If he can drive home the victory, can turn the Canadian National Railways into a national asset, can help solve the transportation problem of the country—and it is the greatest problem we have—he will perform a splendid task.

For the moment, the only advice we venture to offer him is that, having said enough of the right thing in the right way—the most ardent public-ownership enthusiast could not have said it in a better way—he proceed to fulfill his promise to let his acts reveal his calibre from now on.