

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

COMMITTEE ROOM 425,

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

THURSDAY, May 27th, 1926.

The Select Standing Committee on National Railways and Shipping met at 11. o'clock a.m., the Chairman, Mr. Euler, presiding.

The CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen of the committee, if you will come to order, we will proceed. For the information of those who were not here yesterday, I may say that we had a meeting, purely for the purpose of organization. We obtained permission in the House yesterday to print the proceedings and evidence and to sit while the House is sitting, if it is so desired. Perhaps that will not be necessary.

I think the members of this committee are all conversant with the purpose for which this committee is appointed, not only to examine the financial statement and pass upon the estimates, but to form also some sort of, we might say, connecting link between Parliament itself and the officials of the railway. The committee are not precluded for making criticisms, but we are not here principally for that purpose, but to co-operate with the management of the railway for the best interests of the whole undertaking.

It was decided yesterday that we would not to-day go into the details of the report, but that we might have a general preliminary discussion and for that reason it was thought well to invite the president of the road, Sir Henry Thornton, here. Sir Henry (Thornton) is here, and unless other members of the committee have other methods of procedure to offer, I would suggest that we hear from Sir Henry Thornton, and ask him to give us a short review of the operations for the year. Is that agreeable to the committee?

Several MEMBERS: Carried.

Sir HENRY THORNTON: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen: I do not know that there is very much that I can say in a preliminary way of a general nature, because, practically speaking, all that I could say is already embodied in the report. The report is quite full, and quite complete,—and, incidentally, insofar as completeness is concerned, it compares very favourably with reports of privately owned railway systems; in fact, I think we probably give more detailed information, and properly so, than is generally found in such reports.

Reviewing the situation over last year; the figures speak for themselves. The gross earnings were \$9,000,000—and I am using round figures now—more than a year ago, which involved, of course, the handling of more traffic.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: How much less than the year before that?

Sir HENRY THORNTON: Let me see. I think it was \$253,000,000, and to-day is \$245,000,000; \$9,000,000 less than two years ago. We had, of course, in 1923, a very abundant crop. The crop last year was also good, but not quite as good as the previous year.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: Did you ever pick out the figures on the crop showing the position of more agricultural tonnage in 1924 than in 1923?

Sir HENRY THORNTON: I expect you are right there.

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: Of all agriculture?

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: Yes.

Sir HENRY THORNTON: But, at any rate, the net result was that there was an increase of approximately \$9,400,000 of gross, and an increase of \$5,600,000

[Sir Henry Thornton.]