

Mr. COPP: I cannot make it any stronger than I have. The Intercolonial Railway is now a part of the great Canadian National system; it has been handed over to the board of directors headed by Sir Henry Thornton, and it should be operated entirely as a business proposition in the interests of all the people. If indirectly any sympathetic consideration should be given to the Maritime provinces on account of their peculiar situation, I feel sure that Sir Henry Thornton and his board of directors will give that phase of it the best possible attention.

Mr. MARTELL: If my hon. friend will pardon me again, is he prepared to say that we are entitled only to sympathetic consideration? Does he not regard our rights in respect to the Intercolonial Railway as a condition precedent to confederation? Have we not a right not merely to sympathetic consideration but to equitable and legal consideration?

Mr. COPP: That is a matter that is entirely in the hands of the board of directors.

Mr. MARTELL: It is not entirely in the hands of the board of directors.

Mr. COPP: The operation of this road is entirely in the hands of the board of directors. I am prepared to meet my friends in the matter of getting anything done for the Maritime provinces that can equitably and reasonably be done. I am simply saying that I have joined with my colleagues in taking the attitude that we are not going to resort to political considerations in that connection.

I should like to just refer to the attitude I took in 1919 when this matter was before parliament, on which occasion my views were placed on Hansard and before the public. When the bill amalgamating the different sections of the Canadian National Railway system was brought down, I opposed it. I believed that the Intercolonial Railway should have been retained as a separate entity as it was at the time of confederation, and I so emphatically expressed myself at that time. For many days the bill was before parliament, and after it went through the committee of the House and came up for third reading I moved an amendment that the bill should not then pass but should be referred back and be amended so that the Intercolonial Railway should not form part of the Canadian National Railway system, but should remain as a separate entity. These were my remarks:

I register my protest against the Intercolonial being linked up to the Canadian Northern Railway system and the supplanting of the Intercolonial railway employees who have spent half a lifetime on this road, know the operations and are just as capable of occupying prominent railway positions in this country and fulfilling the duties appertaining to them as any person brought in from the outside. The employees of the old Intercolonial railway throughout the Maritime provinces are being supplanted by other employees who are not any more capable, but are, if anything, less capable, than the men who have occupied prominent positions on that road. I have no word to say against those who will manage the Canadian National Railways system or the Canadian Northern Railway. I do not know what their success may be. I trust it will be of the very best. I have nothing to say against the government for passing this measure and operating the Canadian Northern Railway, as it has been forced upon them. But I do protest against the amalgamation of the Intercolonial Railway with that system. It never was the intention at the time of Confederation that we should be linked up with that system and operated as a company road.

I placed myself clearly on record on that occasion, but my amendment was not accepted by the government of the day and as a result the Intercolonial Railway became a part of the Canadian National Railway system and so remains at the present time.

Mr. BAXTER: May I ask a question? If these are the minister's views, why does he not take the railway out, now that he is in power, and put it back where it was?

Mr. MARTELL: That is what I say.

Mr. COPP: The Intercolonial was made part of the Canadian National Railway system by our opponents; it was placed there and left there and is now in charge of the Canadian National Railway Board. When this matter was under consideration the Liberal party opposed the taking over of some of the systems, but I believe a large number of the people to-day, if not the majority of them, are in favour of publicly owned and operated railways and the Canadian National Railway system as at present operated. At the first session of parliament after the Liberal party came into power we told the people that we were going to give the Canadian National Railways and public ownership a fair chance—and we are doing so—by not interfering in any way with the board of directors appointed to carry on the work.

Mr. BAXTER: May I ask another question? Has the hon. minister changed his mind and come to the conclusion that the policy of the old one was the correct one?

Mr. COPP: I would ask my hon. friend if he has changed his mind in regard to the operation of this railway.