

Thornton

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Sir Henry's Fine Stand

Sir Henry Thornton will find he has the backing of the mass of the Canadian people in his determination to keep the Canadian National Railways out of politics. He is quoted as saying at the Montreal banquet in his honor as follows:

"But let it be emphatically understood, now—once and for all—that there is to be no political interference, direct or indirect, in the administration and working of the Canadian National Railways. I cannot put it any more forcefully without transgressing the rules of polite speech, and if I knew of any words which would make this point more clear I would unhesitatingly employ them. The prime minister has solemnly assured me that there is to be no political interference, and it was with this distinct understanding that I accepted the post which the Government has done me the honor to offer. This assurance is the only assurance that any Government, irrespective of political complexion, would be compelled to make under similar circumstances. It is vital to the success of our railways, and any other procedure spells inevitable disaster."

Sir Joseph Flavelle, who as chairman of the board of Grand Trunk for the past few years has had considerable experience with politicians, is evidently not as optimistic as Sir Henry as to the possibilities of eliminating political interference. In his speech at the same banquet he declared:

"The most critical will accept this declaration of Government policy as satisfactory. But, frankly, I have seen little evidence of its observance. I wonder if it can be observed in the form stated. It is to be remembered these railways are a publicly owned and operated enterprise, in active business in almost every constituency in the country, and that 90,000 workers are employed.

"If the declared policy is observed a hitherto undeveloped courage and purpose in public affairs will be brought into play, and at a time when a system of group representation in Parliament denies the Government the necessary support for independent action. There will be a distinct advantage which can be realized if the Government gives its supporters in the House, and the public, to understand that the board of the railway company is responsible for the administration of these properties, and that petitions and delegations relating to railway matters will be referred to the board for action. Cabinet Ministers show a tendency to overlook this essential prerogative.

"There will be need for robust public opinion which will make itself felt in the support of the Government in its struggle against designing politicians, and against the insistence of sectional demands, and which will equally condemn the Government if it yields to this pressure, or if it fails to courageously support the administration of the railways on the floor of the House when it is untably attacked."

It is to be hoped that Sir Henry will stand determinedly on his word. The retiring president, Mr. Hanna, insisted on the C. N. R. being out of this business.

who tried to eliminate politics in the management of the Intercolonial. His policy has since been followed.

Since the King Government came into power a determined effort to restore patronage on the I. C. R. has been made by the Liberal politicians of the Maritime Provinces, as Hon. W. C. Kennedy, minister of railways, could testify if he were free to speak. The dismissal of Mr. Hanna and the old board was in itself a piece of petty politics. In Lanark County contracts were promised if a Liberal was returned. Sir Henry Thornton thus has a big job in his hand if he can keep the present Government from interfering, no matter how good the intentions of the prime minister and Mr. Kennedy.

Sir Henry starts off as president under auspicious circumstances. The road financially, thanks to the able management of the past few years, is in a greatly improved position, there is a fine esprit de corps among the employees, and the general outlook for business is on the up-grade. Sir Henry has the best wishes for success of the people of Canada. If there has been criticism it is not against him, but of the dismissal, without good reason, of a president and directors who had done excellent work.

The future welfare of Canada depends in a large extent upon the success of its railways. If the Canadian National and the C. P. R. are not in a prosperous condition then it is reflected upon the country as a whole. If the financial load the C. N. R. now imposes on the nation can be removed it will lighten the burden of taxation.

The Free Press wishes Sir Henry Thornton every success as president of the C. N. R., and hopes particularly he will stand adamant in his determination to keep out politics.

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