

Vancouver Province Dec. 6/22

SIR HENRY'S STATEMENT.

It is not yet determined whether the headquarters of the Canadian Government railways will be in Montreal, Toronto or Ottawa. But Montreal was selected for the inaugural statement of President Sir Henry Thornton. This may be a consolation prize in view of another choice of location for the head office. The president's deprecation of sectional jealousies applies particularly to the first symptoms of such a feeling that have been forced on his attention. Large cities can be as small in their sectional jealousy as a cross-roads village. The Dominion at large is more concerned with what the head office does than where it is.

Nothing but good can be said of the spirit in which Sir Henry addresses the Canadian public through the Montreal Board of Trade. Acknowledging the courtesy of the president of the Canadian Pacific he pays a high tribute to that corporation, which he welcomes to a friendly rivalry. He makes generous acknowledgement of the merits of his own predecessors in the management of the government system. Looking forward to his own task Sir Henry admits that public ownership and operation of railways has not usually been successful. Nevertheless he takes up his work with modest yet self-respecting confidence that the Canadian experience may be an exception.

Since Canada finds herself with these railways on her hands it is necessary to make the best of the situation, and the President is hopeful that the best may be complete relief of the taxpayer from charges in respect to these roads. That means a net income of \$40,000,000, which Sir Henry thinks may come sooner than many people expect, though a large increase of population and some curtailment in expenditure will be required to bring it to pass. Meanwhile the system has reached, or is about reaching a position in which the earnings equal the operating expenses, and is gradually improving with the closer organization of the constituent lines.

On one interesting question Sir Henry is so positive that he can not find adequate language to express that certainty. There will be no political interference with the management and policy of the government railways. Sir Henry Thornton may or may not know how often and how positively such assurances have been given in the past. Mr. Hanna was as positive as his successor.

But what valid assurance can anybody give on this point? Only a week before Sir Henry made this declaration the member of Parliament for Pictou, one of the most influential members of the Liberal party, stated

in a public address that the government railways could not be withdrawn from political or parliamentary control. The railways belonged to the people and had to go to Parliament for the appropriations. Their management was subject to parliamentary criticism and investigation. That is Mr. Macdonald's declaration, and he represents certain owners.

Notwithstanding Mr. Hanna's declaration of independence he was called before a parliamentary committee and in spite of his protests was asked to explain purchases of supplies and other matters of business. Employees who were not satisfied with their treatment had the matter brought up in Parliament and investigated in committee. Sir Henry Thornton says that the government railway has only one shareholder to deal with. He is liable to find that this shareholder is not what Lennie's Grammar used to call "a noun of multitude with unanimity of idea" calling for a verb in the singular. He may have in mind a difference between political control and public or parliamentary control, but whatever his view there is before him a prospect of disillusion.

Yet we hope that the government, Parliament and public will give Sir Henry the fullest possible chance to carry out his programme. Let him be as free as possible from what he calls political interference and others may call public control. If he can thus give better service, and ultimately pay interest on the public investment the people will be glad to let him alone.

But the conditions of such escape from public intervention and from what he may call sectional jealousies are competent management, just policies and perfect fairness toward all sections of the country.

MEIGHEN PAPERS, Series 3 (M.G. 26, I, Volume 135)

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