

*The Address—Mr. Baxter*

unwise acts with regard to railway building rendered ultimately necessary the steps that had to be taken with regard to these railways. But we are facing, as some one said the other day, a condition and not a theory—we have the railways. I would like to hear something—and I speak in all seriousness; if we are going to face this problem from a national standpoint, I would like to hear something more hopeful, something more helpful and more trustful than I have heard from my hon. friend the Minister of Finance the other day. He did not speak of this, and I had assumed, perhaps wrongly, that he was an ardent public ownership man. He certainly did not speak as such. I would think however that it would be better, for the education of the people of this country as to the necessity of vital co-operation of all interests in this country, to make the best of the amalgamated roads. I would think it would be well for a man of the high standing of the Minister of Finance to give us some hope and some light in dealing with this problem, instead of rather reprobating it and treating it as if it were something nobody could ever hope to accomplish. If that is the real view of the government, if they have made up their minds on this important subject, if they feel we can never make a success of these railways, then I would invite them to put an end to the farce at once and let us proceed to get rid of these railways before the burden on the country becomes more and more intolerable. There are just the two courses to pursue, one is to go ahead and make good with the railways, and the other is to get rid of them. Whatever course the administration sees fit to pursue, let us have energy and force back of it, and do not have any cold water thrown on the proposition by any member of the administration. The order in council has been passed, and we have co-ordination to some extent. Whether we have within the system the real desire to make it effective I do not know.

I am not going to criticise the choice made by the government of the administrator of the railways. I believe every man has a right to a chance to make good, and I propose to reserve any remarks or any criticism of that appointment until we get a full, fair opportunity for a demonstration and see what the gentleman can do. Let him be judged by his works. In the meantime I might enter a little plea for somewhat more action and somewhat less speech. This country is probably unknown to Sir Henry Thornton, and I trust he will be able to grapple with the tremendous problems that he has to face. But I would rather hear him

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tell afterwards, if that will be necessary, what he has done, than hear quite so much about what may be done. While touching on this subject, I do not think that the attitude, perhaps, of some public men is altogether wise, when they tell us, both in this House and out of it, that you cannot keep the railway system out of politics, or rather, that you must have politics in the railway system. I am going to be extremely candid and say that I am afraid they are right. But I would rather have them say to the public the thing that they do not mean than say the thing that they believe. They do so on other occasions, why should they not do it on this? They are telling you, or they are telling us, that there is this higher class of politics, this general direction of the affairs of the railways, that is necessarily political, and that this House which, after all, means the government, must control. I cannot quarrel with that. The administration for the time being, must settle things. I think, perhaps, our criticism is that they do not quite settle things enough. What I do object to are the suggestions that come in this very chamber, and that I have heard in Sir Henry Thornton's presence at public meetings from prominent members of the Liberal party, that you cannot keep the road out of politics; that the country is paying for the services of the men who are on the road, and that they are going to have some control. That means just this to my mind: perhaps not all the leaders, but certainly those who control the political activities of the party, have made up their minds that, under the guise of public declarations that there shall be no politics, there shall be a very effective and very operative political programme permeating the whole course of the National railways. We have some evidence of this in the province of New Brunswick. I do not care how far they go; all I want is that the thing shall come out in the daylight. If they are right in what they say, that you cannot keep the railroad out of politics, then we ought to get together in this House and get the railroad out of the hands of the people as quickly as possible. If you can run the railway without politics, then we ought to use the whole force of all political parties in this House to keep politics out of the railway administration.

When, a little over a year ago, the party of which I am a member was making efforts to obtain or to retain the confidence of the people, in which effort we were not as successful as we would like to have been, in the Maritime provinces we told the people frankly what our programme was, not that we had the direction of the railway system, but that as