

(February 24, 1930)

Partners

BY SIR HENRY THORNTON

PRESIDENT SMITH:—Gentlemen, we are very pleased to have as a guest today His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, Mr. Randolph Bruce. With Sir Henry Thornton as our guest of honor, the introductory remarks of your chairman can be especially brief. Sir Henry's solid achievements as President of the Canadian National Railways are common knowledge and I think he will forgive me if I omit well-deserved words of eulogy. From time to time, we like to hear from Sir Henry Thornton and he is good enough to respond to our wishes. His subject today stimulates curiosity. The title is "Partners". I am not quite prepared to say if by partners he means the Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific Railways. I will leave it to him to explain. Sir Henry Thornton.

SIR HENRY THORNTON:—Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I have to thank your chairman very cordially for refraining from a eulogy of my life and character. In order, however, to promote tranquility, let me assure you that I fully agree with all the things he would have said. It has been a special pleasure in welcoming His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia. His presence here from the great Province he represents on the Pacific Coast puts life and spirit into all of us. I may say from personal experience that I know of no one who can put better spirits into us than His Honor.

Gentlemen, the subject that I propose to inflict upon you may excite a certain degree of curiosity. Your chairman somewhat frivolously intimated that perhaps I was going to discuss a partnership arrangement between the Canadian Pacific and the Canadian National Railways. Let me immediately assure you that we are partners with the Cana-

dian Pacific—partners in good works for the development of Canada. We may have our little contentions from time to time, which may be described as simply the seasoning to good food, but after all is said and done, merely because we sharpen our swords on each other's hides, that is no reason why we cannot combine when common interests are at stake.

Partnership can be described as an association of individuals or groups of individuals seeking common objectives and susceptible to the same thing. Partnerships may be both voluntary and involuntary. I am not concerned with the former type because he who enters into a partnership of a voluntary character is competent to look out for himself. I would like the privilege today of discussing with you those involuntary partnerships into which we find ourselves forced and out of which we must work some common avenue which will lead to our mutual objectives. Now, to begin with, there are in this nation and in all nations religious partnerships. He who embarks upon a discussion of religious matters ventures upon a slippery and dangerous path, but I shall endeavor to say a word or two to you about our religious partnerships which I hope will not give offence, and I shall proceed warily. I suppose that all of us in this room, or at least the very great majority of us, are proud to own ourselves Christians. That is to say, we follow the teachings and the inspirations of one great Master; and even if there be those amongst us who owe allegiance to an older religion, those will at least recognize the fine philosophy of the Bible. However, we all follow presumably the philosophy of the Bible. That seems to create a common ground upon which we might meet. In this Canada of ours, we remember the great number of religious sects all owning and proud of a common Master, and yet we have all diverged into various paths of activity, generally in pursuit of some formula or doctrine which is an outgrowth of the Bible. I suppose that if we search the world over we will find not many questions which have excited more warfare, more tragedy or more hostile divergence of opinion than those things which are really religious. And yet we should all be able to live in peace, comfort and happiness. Canada is a country which extends from the

Atlantic to the Pacific and from the boundary of the United States to the North Pole. It has within it a vast number of people owning different religious faiths. It would seem to be quite enough for us all to live in peace and harmony. But we forget sometimes that we who are Christians are all partners. Partners in what? Partners in following the fundamental principles of the Great Master. May we not find room and opportunity in our country to pursue these activities without uncertainty, contention and on the principle of live and let live?

And then there is our racial partnership. Years and years ago there came to the eastern shores of Canada, hardy adventurers from Normandy and Brittany, and they here founded the Province of France which was called New France. They developed along their traditional lines. They tilled the fields and navigated the rivers and the early fathers of their religion carried Christianity to the hostile tribes and natives in Ontario. They were pursuing a peaceful, enterprising work. In the course of time, due to the exigencies of politics and in the evolution of history, it came about that England acquired that property and with it acquired a large French population fully established here; and here they are today. There is a partnership in Canada between our French-Canadian population and our English-speaking population which is quite insoluble. We are both here. What are we going to do about it? The simple thing seems, that we proceed in our respective fields to develop the country. I have never myself been able to understand the uproar about bi-lingualism. If there were no Englishmen within ten thousand miles of Canada, it would be a good thing for every French child to speak English. If there were no Frenchmen, it would be a good thing for every English-speaking child to speak French. I fail to see the cause of the uproar. I speak English indifferently and French ungrammatically. My French happens to be the good old type which sometimes brings home the bacon. I am very glad to have a few words of French in my vocabulary. Let us take these principles. Let us join hands and not bother about superficial things; and get on with the job of developing the country.

Now then we have those partners who represent differ-

ent sections of Canada. We have the Maritimes, sometimes with their grievances; we have also Quebec with its French-Canadian population, Ontario with its English-speaking population and with a great manufacturing potentiality. We have the meal ticket of Canada in the great agricultural resources of the West. We have the Garden of Eden down on the Pacific coast. Scattered all through these different sections there are great mining opportunities, vast stores of water power, great forests, exploration, development, in fact, all natural resources which bountiful providence can give to any country. While each section justifiably pursues its own objectives, let us not forget that no section of this country can prosper unless the whole prospers. And there we have another involuntary partnership from which there is no escape.

Then, too, we have the industrial partnership. We have our great railway systems, our great manufacturing enterprises and many other industrial activities employing large numbers of hands, generally described as capital on the one hand and labor on the other. If ever there were two partners in any enterprise, it is capital which establishes that enterprise, and brains and labor and things that carry on that enterprise. Surely there is really an 'unsolvable partnership. We of the Canadian National Railway have for some time been trying a plan known as the co-operative system, which has for its object to give labor a reasonable voice in the management. In other words, it is an attempt to give to labor a partnership status in the enterprise. We have just started in our shops—in each shop there is a committee of our men and a committee of foremen and officers. These meet once a week to discuss better methods, improved devices and better conditions of safety, continued employment and all these things which make for the welfare of both the employer and employee. Throughout the last year, we have had presented to us by our men several thousand suggestions looking to improvement along the various lines which I have just described. Of these suggestions about 72% have been adopted and brought into force. The remaining ten or fifteen percent is still under consideration and the small balance rejected. In other words, gentlemen, as a result of that partnership plan we have got all our men

in our shops devoting the best of their brains to help us, the employer, to do our work a little better than we did it before. The efforts of a hundred thousand men constitute a great asset. That is the kind of thing which I mean when I describe the partnership between capital and labor—a great industrial partnership. The real advancement of industry in the future will come and will flow from the recognition of the employee by the employer and the recognition on the part of the employee of the responsibility he owes to the enterprise which gives him his daily bread.

We also have in our Dominion another partnership which I shall describe as the economic partnership. It is the partnership of production, consumption and transportation. The great wheat crop of our Western prairies would be of small value if there were no consumer and no means of transportation. If it were not for the wheat crop the prospective consumer would suffer. If the crop were not marketed what would be the value of our agricultural activity of the West? In our great forests there are being cut thousands of cords of wood which can be converted by our great paper mills into the product upon which the news system of this continent is founded—our pulp industry. Of what value would be those forests, wherein would be the profit to the manufacturer were it not for the consumer and that essential thing—transportation? No country probably offers a greater lure to the manufacturer than Canada. I say lure because here we have vast quantities of undeveloped water power which in turn means cheap energy already turned to advantage by many industries. There are also many industries, manufacturing various forms of electrical appliances, that depend upon the harnessing of this water. Where would all that be if it were not for the transportation link between consumer and producer?

So there again is this great partnership. Certainly we who are engaged in the transportation business must furnish to the consumer safe, speedy and adequate transportation at reasonable rates. Freight rates here are less than in any other country on the face of the globe and rightly so because the distances through which we move our production to the consumer are vast. Were it not for the favorable freight situation in Canada our production would lag. I do ask

you to consider this. Having regard for the service which our railway systems are rendering to the people of Canada, they are entitled to that return for their effort which will enable them to retain solvency, pay proper wages to their employees and prepare themselves for the future demands which the advancement of the country will lay upon them. That seems a sane and simple principle. So you can see the advantage of this great important economic partnership.

These then, gentlemen, represent the various aspects of partnership in the Dominion of Canada. In this country of ours we find perhaps the most fertile field and, at the same time, the most necessitous field for the development of the partnership idea of any country of the world. We have amongst others one great asset in that we have lately been coming to a full knowledge of our potentiality and getting into the full stride of our economic advancement. I say an asset, because we can profit from the experience of other nations, who have tried various economic principles, various religious principles, various schemes of social organization, and from all of these we can draw our own lesson. Therefore, we are perhaps relatively happy, in that our development comes at this time when science and when the social student and the political observer have exceeded efforts of years ago. We can from the knowledge of the ages that have passed select those things which best suit our peculiar conditions. Within this Dominion there are gathered all the fundamental essentials for the development of a great nation. We are widely scattered. There are crevices in between our various sections which need filling up and which will be filled up in time. But we have all through the country a wealth of minerals, of water-power, of agricultural production—everything which providence can give to any country; and in addition to that, we have an industrious, thrifty, law-abiding nation. With all these fundamentals the only thing that is needed is to forget differences, accept the partnership theory and get along with the development of the country.

From time to time there come to our shores disgruntled individuals, perhaps saddened and harrowed by political experiences abroad, who out of their tragedy conceive new and untried schemes of government. They come to us

apparently with life-preservers for the purpose of saving our own nation from the evils of past experiments. To those we might properly say, "we have founded this country upon certain principles and in accordance with certain principles in which we believe, and in those principles and traditions we have faith in the future. We are very much obliged to you for your kindly effort but, nevertheless, this is our country. We are going to run this country our own way. And if there is to be an arousing of the slaves we will attend to it ourselves;" and the answer to such gentry is: "if you do not like this country go and live somewhere else and the quicker you go, the less trouble you will give us."

Now, gentlemen, I thank you very cordially for this opportunity of speaking to you. I am afraid what I have told you has been incoherent, but if it furnishes in some small degree a principle to which we can adhere, and which we can develop, then perhaps I shall not have wasted your time in coming here today, I will feel in my humble fashion I have not spoken in vain.