



RAILWAYS - AIRLINES
STEAMSHIPS - HOTELS
EXPRESS - TELEGRAPHS

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY SYSTEM

Montreal 1, Que.,
January 30th, 1951.

Thomas H. Raddall, Esq.,

LIVERPOOL, N.S.

Dear Mr. Raddall:

As a reader who has enjoyed and profited by your book "HALIFAX - Warden of the North" and as one who has admired your skill in putting it together, I am taking the liberty of turning to you for advice upon a problem with which we are confronted here.

For some years we have been talking about the desirability of having someone write a history of the Canadian National Railways but it is only since Donald Gordon interested himself in the subject that we have been able to give it serious consideration. And now we find ourselves stumped.

The type of history we have in mind is one that would be sufficiently complete to have real academic value, yet, at the same time, handled with that touch which would give it a popular appeal. What we seem to need to find out is:

- (a) Approximately how long it would take to do the work.
- (b) What, roughly, should be the nature of the terms likely to interest a writer.
- (c) An approximation of the cost of the project.

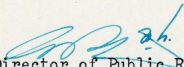
We, of course, would pay a fee, provide such transportation as might be needed and we would do everything possible to help the author with his research by putting him in touch with individuals and with all records that are available.

Many of the latter are sadly scattered, I am afraid, and some may be completely lost. The author, however, could rely upon our full co-operation.

This task is quite beyond the competence of our Department. It seems to me to need the services of a man who is trained in how to conduct historical research and who has the skill to put his findings into interesting words. We would be most appreciative of any advice you can give us.

Sincerely yours,

GHLash/1.


Director of Public Relations.

February 5th, 1951

Mr. G.H. Lash,
Director of Public Relations,
Canadian National Railways,
Montreal 1, Que.

Dear Mr. Lash,

With regard to your letter of 30th January, I should say the job of writing a history of the Canadian National Railways would take two years -- one year for research and another for the actual writing. That is if the book is to have, as you say, real academic value as well as popular appeal. The two factors can be married, and when the union is successful a history can be the most fascinating thing in the world. The story of the C.N.R., which contains in its bones so much of the story of the Canadian people, especially in the tremendous development since the turn of the century, offers every possibility of such a union. If I felt free to do it, I should hasten to offer myself as a candidate for the job.

However, in the career which I have mapped out for myself the writing of history (such as "Halifax, Warden of The North") can only be an interesting diversion. My major concern is the novel, with which I have had some success, and as you will readily realize, a success must be followed up if it is to be of permanent value. I could not take two years "out" to tackle a job of history, no matter how interesting it might be. I do not regret the time I took "out" to do the book on Halifax, which brought me a great deal of personal satisfaction (not to mention a Governor-General's Award !), but I realize that another diversion of this sort, coming so soon after the other, might affect seriously my position as a novelist in a highly competitive world.

Probably you had no notion of engaging me (or anybody else) at this time, but I mention my position as a preliminary to offering you advice. I should say that the job is worth at least \$15,000 to a competent writer, and \$20,000 if you find the man who can really combine authentic color with the facts. Apart from this, your actual printing and binding costs (for a book like "Halifax") would run pretty close to \$3 per copy on an edition of 5,000 copies, which nowadays is regarded as a minimum. The more you print, of course, the smaller the cost per volume.

Sincerely,



RAILWAYS - AIRLINES
STEAMSHIPS - HOTELS
EXPRESS - TELEGRAPHS

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY
SYSTEM

Montreal 1, Que.,
February 7th, 1951.

Thomas H. Raddall, Esq.,
LIVERPOOL, N.S.

Dear Mr. Raddall:

Will you please accept my sincerest thanks for the promptness with which you answered my letter of January 30th, and for the valuable information you gave me.

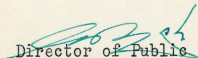
It is interesting to note that your estimate of the time factor approximates my own but I had thought that the writing fee would have been considerably higher. No doubt that estimate will vary according to the individual.

I confess that you were among the few writers we consider capable of doing the sort of job we have in mind and while your withdrawal from consideration is, I admit, disappointing, nevertheless it is understandable and were I in your position, I'm afraid, my attitude would be similar. Only a few days ago I purchased a copy of your "Nymph and the Lamp" and while my time for novel-reading is far more limited than I would like, what I have read so far makes it easy for me to understand why you should wish to continue to write in this medium.

You are a busy man and already you have been generous with your time, but if I should need a bit more advice, will you allow me to call on you again? I shall promise not to bother you often or too much.

Again with many thanks and good wishes, I remain,

Sincerely yours,


Director of Public Relations.

*Ans'd
Feb 19/51*
GHLash/1.