

public contracts. Then the hon. member for North Norfolk continued as follows :

There is no subsidy in this contract. Now, Sir, I desire to refer to the wise provisions in the public interests contained in this agreement. Care has been taken in this respect. We have not a Minister of Railways and Canals with carte blanche in the construction of a trans-continental line. This would be a very pleasant condition, no doubt, for a public official to occupy.

And the present Minister of Railways and Canals (Hon. Mr. Emmerson) said :

And in that very attitude, it seems to me, he shows an inconsistency which would almost lead one to conjecture that the real cause of his resignation was not the building of another line from the province of Quebec to the maritime provinces.

And my hon. friend from Hants (Mr. Russell) was particularly bitter. I shall not quote his words, but they can be found by any hon. gentleman who desires to examine 'Hansard.' And my hon. friend from Victoria (Hon. Mr. Ross) used the following language with regard to Mr. Blair.

Hon. Mr. ROSS. And I stand by it now.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. The hon. member for Victoria tells us that he stands by these words :

I wonder if he had been asked to be the leader of this great commission that is to conduct this railway policy, what his conduct would be and where we would find him now. Well, let me say to them that an ex-Minister of Railways and Canals does not count much in this country now, and when a man loses his seat in the government he loses his power and his influence.

That was the view of the situation entertained by my hon. friend from Victoria (Hon. Mr. Ross). The matter, therefore, stood in this position. There was a charge of absolute folly, of an absolute waste and squandering of public money made by Mr. Blair against the government. Not only that, but there was the charge, as interpreted by my hon. friend the Minister of Justice (Hon. Mr. Fitzpatrick), of unworthy motives in the making of this contract, which has been so much lauded. The government proposed to bring on an election. About that there cannot be much doubt. We have it on the authority of my hon. friend the Solicitor General (Mr. Lemieux). We also have the fact that campaign literature was distributed throughout the country. We also had the government putting up their candidates in the majority of constituencies, and making every possible preparation for a general election. But, if all tales be true, a man came from New Brunswick and told my right hon. friend that that province was not in very good shape, and could not be counted on if Mr. Blair should take a part in the fight. What followed? It was felt that it would be much better to have Mr. Blair disappear, and negotiations were entered into with the view of procuring his silence. And with all these charges of unworthy

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax).

motives and absolute folly unretracted and still ringing in their ears, the government appointed this gentleman to one of the highest positions at their disposal. I do not know what explanation my right hon. friend will give us, but this much must be said of Mr. Blair, that if the government have given him this certificate, both of ability and character, by appointing him chairman of the Railway Commission, every one of these hon. gentlemen opposite who attacked him, every one who called him shifty, as the hon. member for Hants did, and who belittled him in every way and imputed unworthy motives to him—every one of these gentlemen must do one of two things. They must either rise in their place and condemn the government for having appointed Mr. Blair to that position or apologize to Mr. Blair for the unfounded attacks they had made on him.

Mr. Speaker, the commission which has been appointed is one which has most important judicial duties to perform, and certain administrative duties also. It will have control over vast public and private interests, and it should be composed of men of the highest ability and absolutely beyond suspicion. Mr. Blair has charged the government with unworthy motives. He has denounced their transcontinental railway scheme as a wanton and senseless waste of public money. Not one of these charges has he ever retracted. On the other hand, the government have declared that Mr. Blair was actuated by unworthy motives. The men they put up to reply to Mr. Blair belittled him in every possible way. They called him shifty, insincere, and even treacherous. Yet the government have appointed this man to this important position. Was it or was it not their object to remove Mr. Blair by this means from their path in the province of New Brunswick and throughout the country? Can any other conclusion than that such was their object be drawn by any fair minded man in this House or country? If there be any other conclusion which can be drawn, I have no doubt that my right hon. friend (Sir Wilfrid Laurier), with that ability and ingenuity which always characterizes his utterances in this House, will be able to devise some reason for the appointment to this commission of a gentleman so opposed to the railway policy of the government.

This commission is an important one, and when the government, during last session, called upon us to vote large salaries for the men who were to compose it, there was not very much opposition from this side of the House. There was not from myself any word of protest. We realized that the men who should be called on to perform the duties of that commission ought to be men who would command a liberal salary. But, if I might venture to make a suggestion it seems to me that when the Appropriation Bill for that purpose was before the House,