

ed, I flatter myself that we should have been successful in carrying on the affairs of this country. Now, for the purpose of placing it on record, I shall read what Mr. Foster stated in the House of Commons. He started out with this declaration :

I may say in the first place there is no disagreement between ourselves and the Premier upon any question of public policy, trade or constitutional, with regard to which action has been already taken, or in respect to which an attitude has been assumed by the Government under the present Premier. I beg also to say that we retain our firm belief in the principles and policy of the Liberal-Conservative party, with which we are in entire accord, and of which, in common with others, we have been and will remain the exponents in so far as our ability admits. We have lost none of our confidence in the sound and healthy condition of the Liberal-Conservative party of Canada, or of our belief that it embodies a policy which the majority of the electorate considers essential to the continued welfare and progress of the country, or of our faith that under firm and prudent leadership it will come back triumphant from the polls.

In that respect, in sentiment and in feeling, I am fully in accord with my late colleague. He states that there has been no difference of opinion between us. That being the case, can any of you conceive why, after the opening of the session, after the Speech from the Throne has been given not only to Parliament, but to the whole country, you should find seven members of the Cabinet sending in their resignations, simply because they did not like the gentleman with whom they had been so long associating, some of them for eight or ten years, and whose ability and character they knew just as well as they do to-day. I readily admit that I never assumed to possess that gigantic intellect with which these gentlemen who have retired from the Cabinet have been endowed. Not at all. All I claim for myself is, moral honesty, a firm conviction of what is right, and determination under all circumstances, whether it accords with the prejudices of one party or another, to endeavour to carry out what I believe to be for the best interests of the country. Now comes the main part of the explanation :

Though with many misgivings we agreed to enter the Government under Mr. Bowell in succession to Sir John Thompson, we have nevertheless unitedly and loyally striven to the best of our ability to make it strong and efficient, and it has been with growing regret that we have seen our efforts in a measure of success less than that for which we had hoped and striven. We are of the opinion that the Liberal-Conservative party ought to be represented by the strongest Government

possible to be secured from its ranks, that the necessity therefor was never greater than under existing circumstances, and we believe that such a Government can be formed without delay. This we have repeatedly urged upon the Premier with the result that we found ourselves face to face with Parliament having a Government with its numbers incomplete, and with no assurance that the present Premier could satisfactorily complete it. Under these circumstances we thought it our duty to retire, and in this manner to pave the way, if possible, for the formation of a Government whose Premier could command the confidence of all his colleagues, could satisfy the Liberal-Conservative party, that its strongest elements were at its head and impress the country that it had a Government which was united and had power to govern. We affirm with the utmost sincerity that the action we have taken has sprung from no feeling of personal dislike or personal ambition, but has been solely dictated by our wish to sink all minor considerations in the presence of our great desire that the best interests of our country should be duly conserved.

I might naturally, I think, ask if these reasons were the sincere convictions of the gentleman who wrote them, or of the others who acquiesced in the sentiments? If so, how is it that the discovery was not made until we were in the beginning of a session, until it was impossible almost to proceed with the business of the country without having not only a disintegration of the Government itself, but treating the people of the country with, I was going to say, comparative contempt? Surely my colleagues knew my incapacity to govern before the meeting of Parliament and long before they sent in their resignations? Surely they could not have come to the opinion in so short a period that I was unfit to continue at the head of this Government? What occurred between the writing of that speech, the placing of it in His Excellency's hands, the meeting of Parliament, and the delivery of that speech by His Excellency? What, I ask, could possibly have occurred, or what have you been told occurred, during those two or three days to lead them to the conclusion which impelled them to take so important a step as they have done? Had they come to me previous to the meeting of Parliament, had they met me in council and said, "We disagree with the policy which you have laid down;" had they said that there was, in any single particular, a difference of opinion upon the great issues that were agitating the people of the country, and they could not, by any possibility, be a party to it; or had they gone further and said, "After one year and a quarter's experience of you as head of the Government,