

men opposite as to the high qualities, the great talents, and the marked ability of Mr. Blair. I share in everything they said of Mr. Blair. I recognize him as a man of great ability, as a man of great talent; and I have no hesitation in saying that you cannot find to-day in Canada any one who is better endowed than Mr. Blair to be the chairman of the commission, and to administer the law of which he is the author. But, Sir, in my estimation, Mr. Blair made a great mistake last session. In my estimation he made the mistake of his life. In my estimation Mr. Blair should have risen to the occasion; an occasion worthy of his talents and of his great abilities. He failed to do so, and not only did he fail to do so, but my hon. friend (Mr. Borden) recalled language which I think was unworthy of Mr. Blair. But, Sir, because Mr. Blair had committed a grievous fault in my estimation; because he had spoken language which the leader of the opposition has tried to make out as offensive, whether it was meant to be offensive or not; and even if Mr. Blair had been ever so offensive, would I, as adviser to His Excellency the Governor General and as his chief adviser; would I have been worthy of the trust which is reposed in me by the people of Canada if I had allowed my own private resentment to weigh in the balance against the abilities of a man who was so well fitted for the position? Sir, my hon. friend sought to find unworthy motives for our appointment of Mr. Blair. My hon. friend came perilously near to being unparliamentary in his language. He did not dare to say so in so many words, but he endeavoured to convey the impression that we had appointed Mr. Blair as chairman of the Railway Commission simply for the purpose of removing him from our path, and preventing him from sitting with the opposition.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I have spoken their thoughts. Well, Sir, this is something we can debate here and now; we can have it out, and leave it to the judgment of both the House and the country. Was it to get rid of Mr. Blair that we appointed him chairman of the Railway Commission, when the fact is that Mr. Blair stated, not on one occasion only, but on many, that he sided with us on everything except the railway policy, and that he could not side with the opposition on their railway policy—why? Because the policy which has been proposed by the hon. leader of the opposition was in his eyes far more condemnable than ours; while in the letter which he addressed to his electors before accepting the office, Mr. Blair stated that he was alone on the question. He could not side with the government on their railway policy, but he could not side with the opposition on theirs, because their scheme was a mad scheme. Therefore why should we try to find motives

or make insinuations when we have the plain fact that Mr. Blair could not act with the opposition?

My hon. friend said this afternoon that there were rumours of an election, and that somebody had come to the leader of the government and had said to him that it would go badly for the government in New Brunswick if Mr. Blair were let loose in that province, and therefore, he was appointed so that we should not have his opposition at the time of the election. But my hon. friend knows that there has been no election, and therefore there was no need of finding that motive. A moment later my hon. friend imagined a conversation as having taken place between Mr. Blair and myself, when I proposed that he should become the chairman of the commission. My hon. friend supposed that I had said, 'Mr. Blair, you have been offensive; you attributed to us motives;' and so on, and so on. Let me suppose that I give the true version of what actually took place between Mr. Blair and myself; it will not be very difficult. It is true, I may have said to Mr. Blair, 'I do not think you have acted in a manner worthy of yourself.' Mr. Blair may have said, 'I do not approve of your policy, but I approve still less of the policy of the opposition.' Then, I may have said to Mr. Blair, 'Though I do not believe you did yourself justice on that occasion, still, as I think you are perfectly well qualified to be chairman of the Railway Commission, I offer you the position.' This is something honourable, something that everybody can appreciate, and it is just as well to look for honourable motives when you can find them as dishonourable motives. This is all the explanation I have to give on this point, and it is unworthy of my hon. friend to try to find unworthy motives for a thing which is so natural as that which I have just explained to the House.

My hon. friend objects to the supplementary contract which we have made with the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company. He stated at the beginning of his remarks, and with some truth, that it was not perhaps opportune at this moment to discuss the supplementary contract, because it must come up later for discussion. In fact, there is already a notice on the paper to take up this question at the earliest possible moment. But after saying that we should not discuss the contract to-day, my hon. friend went on to discuss it, and in a manner which I fail to understand. My hon. friend speaks as if we have been begging the Grand Trunk Company to accept more generous terms than we gave them last year. The truth of the matter is that we had made with them a contract so binding that it could not be ratified by the Grand Trunk shareholders, and we had to make some modifications of it in order to secure its ratification. That is the simple fact of the matter, as will appear when the question is