

Because my right hon. friend and those who supported him, did not consider it consistent with their political interests that that motion should be granted at that time. So far as the public interest is concerned, I defy any man in this House or in this country to show what detriment would have been effected to the public interests by the most thorough and searching inquiry into the administration of the Department of the Interior at that time.

On the 20th of March, 1907, as recorded in 'Hansard' at page 5046, my hon. friend from Hamilton (Mr. Barker) moved a resolution authorizing the Public Accounts Committee to inquire into statements of account presented by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company for construction work on the western section, and also to investigate the disappearance of certificates and other public documents said to have been handed over to the company and destroyed. Again the motion was voted down, again the documents were withdrawn from the inquiry which should have been made in parliament with regard to those matters. Again my right hon. friend disappointed the people of this country, disappointed many right-thinking Liberals as well as Conservatives in his refusal to give a thorough, searching inquiry into a matter in respect of which grave suspicion had arisen in the minds of the people.

In 1908, on the 13th of February, as recorded in 'Hansard' at page 3070 the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Blain) moved ;

The Committee on Public Accounts is constituted for the purpose of affording full and free examination and inquiry into the receipts and expenditures of public moneys and the circumstances in connection therewith.

That in the public interest the greatest possible freedom of investigation and inquiry should be enjoyed by the committee.

That any action of the majority of that committee in excluding evidence or restricting inquiry should be subject to appeal to this House, and upon request for the purpose the necessary report of proceedings ought immediately to be ordered.

The hon. member for Peel who has been a most devoted member of this House and a most valuable member of the Committee on Public Accounts moved that resolution and he supported it in a speech of great force and of well reasoned argument; he pointed out that the proceedings in the Public Accounts Committee had, on more than one occasion degenerated into a farce for lack of a proceeding such as that suggested in his motion. The Prime Minister found no fault with his first two paragraphs but he objected to the last paragraph, which was the most important portion of the resolution, because it was designed to enable this House to pronounce at once upon the judgment of that commit-

Mr. R. L. BORDEN.

tee or of the chairman of that committee in permitting any witness to refuse to give an answer to a reasonable question with regard to matters of public interest.

On April 30, 1908, as recorded in the 'Hansard' at page 7534, I moved:

The investigation conducted by the Civil Service Commission was confessedly partial and incomplete.

That the proposed inquiry before Mr. Justice Cassels is unsatisfactory and insufficient inasmuch as it relates to only one paragraph of the report of that commission and touches but a portion of the administration of one department.

That this House regrets the deplorable extravagance, waste, inefficiency and maladministration revealed by that report and declares that immediate steps should be taken to reform and redress the same.

That the public interest imperatively demands the appointment of an independent commission with full powers to make a thorough and searching investigation into the several departments of the public service.

It has transpired since, not only in the very limited inquiry permitted by the government and carried out by Mr. Justice Cassels but in the recent inquiry into the affairs of the Department of Public Printing, that the motion I moved on the 30th of April, 1908, was one which the government of this country ought to have granted, and that they were recreant to their duty as public servants of this country in not acquiescing in it and carrying out that investigation.

On July 8, 1908, as recorded at page 12291, the member for Simcoe, my hon. friend (Mr. Lennox) moved:—

That the committee appointed to investigate into the charges of overclassification and overpayments on the National Transcontinental railway be instructed to resume and complete the investigation.

I shall not go over the reasons for that, they were set before the House at that time. The government denied any further investigation because Major Hodgins had made certain statements in the public press declaring that in his opinion this investigation might be conducted better by another tribunal. Apart altogether from the statements which had been made by Major Hodgins, there were at that time before that committee and before this House, statements of engineers of the Grand Trunk railway which demanded in trumpet tones the most thorough investigation into every matter of expenditure in connection with the construction of the National Transcontinental railway, yet the motion was voted down. My right hon. friend (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) in the west on one occasion spoke of the enormous expenditure on the National Transcontinental railway and he had the courage, I would almost be inclined to use the word audacity, to tell the