

This last communication opens with a review of the deliberations which have taken place in Council on the railway question. In this review, matters are stated which, in my estimation, come within the rule that 'the deliberations of the Council, upon all matters which engage their attention, are strictly private and confidential.'

I therefore refrain from discussing them.

With regard to the charge that negotiations with Mr. Hays made progress and were well advanced, before I considered it proper or necessary to acquaint you with the facts, I have only to remind you that I thought advisable at first, to retain in my hands the negotiations of this important subject, keeping the Council constantly informed, until I referred the matter to a sub-committee, of which you were one. Moreover, far from admitting the charge I claim that since you entered the government, at its formation, I have always extended to you the frank, loyal and cordial support which I consider is due by the Prime Minister to his colleagues.

As to the reasons which you put forward for your dissent from our policy, this is not the time or place to review them.

I may observe, however, on the two main points of your objections:—

1. I am surprised at your statement that the projected line from Quebec eastward to Moncton will parallel the Intercolonial Railway. The territory served by the new line is not the same as the territory served by the Intercolonial Railway. Between the two lines there will be, not only a distance varying from forty to seventy-five miles, but a chain of mountains dividing the territory to be served by each of them.

The plan which we have adopted for the construction of the line from Moncton to the Pacific coast, has been purposely selected so as to keep in the hands of the government the key to the transportation problem from the prairies to the ocean, and to leave the initiative of a private company the section of country where energy and enterprise will be constantly required to meet the exigencies of an ever-changing situation.

It was my duty, this morning, to call upon His Excellency the Governor General, to inform him of your resignation, which it was his regret to accept, and in the afternoon, I acquainted the Council of your final determination.

Allow me, in conclusion, to express to you my extreme sorrow for an action which I regard as a great mistake toward yourself, toward your friends, toward your colleagues, and above all toward your country, which, at this juncture, requires a bold and fearless policy of transcontinental development.

Yours very sincerely,

(Sgd. WILFRID LAURIER.

The Hon. A. G. Blair,  
Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, I have about concluded, all I have to say upon this occasion I acquit the right hon gentleman (Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier) of any intention or disposition to offer any discourtesy to me. I realize that it would be foreign to his nature or disposition to offer intentional discourtesy to any one. But I am bound to say there may be occasions when, unintentionally, perhaps the same result follows as though it had been designed. I have not, however, allowed myself, in considering this

Hon. Mr. BLAIR.

question of the resignation to be influenced by any other thought than as to whether or not the proposals in themselves which my right hon. friend had decided to make to parliament were such as were entitled to my support. I have determined that question according to the best lights I possess. I do feel that when my right hon. friend says I made a great mistake toward myself, toward my friends, toward my colleagues and toward my country that he is speaking the honest convictions of his mind. But, Sir, if I am capable of exercising any judgment on a matter of this kind, I am bound to say that I do not agree with my right hon. friend, I am bound to say that if I had come to this parliament, and, with what little knowledge and experience I have had of railway questions deliberately advised this parliament and this country that this was a scheme which merited their acceptance, I do not believe I should not have been doing my duty to myself, and in not doing my duty to myself, I should not have been doing my duty to the party with which I am allied. It was my plain and simple course to let them know at the earliest possible moment, and to let the public know also, how strongly I felt, as a responsible minister of the Crown with respect to this important question. My strong conviction is that this country cannot wisely adopt and carry into operation the policy which my right hon. friends the government has adopted.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN (Halifax). Mr. Speaker, I think it is only right, in view of the announcement which has been made to-day by the Prime Minister (the Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier) and the ex-Minister of Railways and Canals (Hon. A. G. Blair) to state from this side of the House that, while we have, on many occasions opposed that hon. gentleman (Hon. Mr. Blair) as strenuously as we were able to do, we are glad to remember, that no personal feeling has entered into our political conflicts either on his part or, certainly, on our own. While we have not seen eye to eye with him in the past as regards many matters of public interest, still every one of us on this side of the House recognizes to the fullest extent the very great ability which he has brought to the discharge of his public duties, the very great experience which he has acquired in public life, and especially the enormous industry which, on all occasions, he has displayed in the discharge of his duties as a minister of this cabinet. Indeed I know that I am voicing the opinions of gentlemen on both sides of the House when I say that many of us have been surprised, during the past five or six years, that the hon. gentleman had been able to endure the enormous amount of work that has been cast upon his shoulders, particularly during the sessions of parliament.

I do not propose at the present time to