

“are as precious and her honour as dear as his own—(immense cheering)—who steers
“unmoved an even course, indifferent to praise or blame, between the political
“contentions of the day—(cheers)—can never appeal in vain to the confidence and
“generosity of the Canadian people. (Immense applause.)”

But though keeping my final decision in suspense, my mind was much occupied, as Your Lordship may imagine, with the consideration of the various courses open to me. On one point I was quite clear—namely, that it would not be right for me to countenance the settlement of the serious issues raised between my Ministers and their opponents— involving, as they did, the personal honor of the most eminent men in Canada, the fate of my Ministry, and the public credit of the country—except at the hands of a full Parliament, in which the distant provinces of the Dominion were as well represented as those of Ontario and Quebec.

As I have already described to Your Lordship in the earlier part of this despatch, before Parliament adjourned on the 23rd of May, I had caused it to be announced to both Houses that Prorogation would take place on the 13th of August. This arrangement, I have no hesitation in saying, was agreeable to what were then the views of the majority both in the Senate and in the House of Commons. On the faith of this pledge, many gentlemen were gone to so great a distance that it was physically impossible for them to be recalled, and it so happened, from causes to which I have already referred, that by far the larger proportion of these absentees were supporters of the Government. All the Members from British Columbia, except Sir *F. Hincks*, were on the wrong side of the Rocky Mountains. Some Ministerialists were in Europe, as I was informed, others in the States, and even to those in the Maritime Provinces, a return to Ottawa, though not physically impossible, as it was to their colleagues, would prove a great inconvenience at such a season. On the other hand, I learnt that the Opposition were mustering their full force, an operation for which they possessed certain geographical facilities. Were, therefore, the House of Commons to meet for the transaction of public business, it was evident that important votes might be passed, and decisions taken, contrary to the real sense of the country, and that my Ministers might justly complain that they were being unfairly treated, and their fate determined by a packed Parliament.

But, apart from these practical considerations, a grave question of principle seemed to me involved. The Imperial Officer representing the Crown in the Dominion, is the natural protector of the federal rights of its various Provinces, as secured under an Imperial Act. The sanctity of the rights of any one of these Provinces is not affected by the number of its representatives or the amount of its population. In this view it is especially necessary that, in a country of such enormous distances, ample notice should be given of the times and seasons when Parliament is to sit. But if it be once admitted that the official “fixtures” which regulate the opening or closing of a Session and the conduct of public business, are to be capriciously tampered with, and changed at so short a notice as to preclude the distant representatives from being present, it is evident much wrong and inconvenience would result, and the door be opened to a great deal of trickery at the hands of an unscrupulous Minister.

The foregoing considerations pointed pretty distinctly to prorogation as an inevitable necessity of the situation. Only one other alternative indeed either suggested itself then or has occurred to me since, and that was another adjournment of the House to such a date as would suit the convenience of the absentees. At first, I confess this course appeared to me fairly practicable, but further reflection disclosed difficulties I had not at once seen. In the first place, this was an arrangement which I had not the power of enforcing, and I was confronted by the obvious reflection, that if the Government made a motion to that effect, it might be defeated or met with an amendment tantamount to a vote of want of confidence at the hands of the majority in presence, and I should then find myself landed in the very position which I was quite satisfied ought to be avoided,