

Now, I want to know also, in all calmness and all frankness, from the members of this parliament, from whence comes this irresistible and compulsive pressure under which we must drive this thing through now? The thing was never mooted before, and the government took no action, until the Grand Trunk Railway conceived that it would be in their own interest to have the railway project liberally aided by the parliament of Canada which they desired to promote. That is the secret of the whole business; that is where it originated. All the other considerations fell upon unheeding ears. All these dangers never struck our minds, never seem to have entered into our calculations; it never occurred to us that we were under such imminent peril; it never was suggested by any one that the great future of Canada, the very life of Canada was at stake—until the Grand Trunk Railway Company made a call and laid their proposition before my hon. friends and colleagues of the government.

And, Mr. Speaker, how was that language understood by members of the government? There could be but one meaning attached to a portion of these remarks of Mr. Blair. What meaning was attached to this language by members of the government themselves in this House—and I call special attention to the fact that these words of Mr. Blair stand unretracted and not withdrawn before the government and before the people of Canada. Here is what my hon. friend the Minister of Justice said about it; this is the sense in which he understood Mr. Blair's words. Speaking in the session of 1903, as reported at pages 9017 and 9018 of Hansard, he said this:

With reference to the ex-Minister of Railways and Canals, it seems to me—and I regret he is not here to-night—that he might have found some better explanation of the course adopted by the government than to suggest that we were moving forward at the beck and call of Senator Cox. It seems to me that the hon. gentleman owes it to himself, owes it to this country, owes it to the respect his ex-colleagues bear for him, and which he is presumed to bear for them, to explain what he meant. We should stop here now this cry which has gone forward throughout the country that this scheme is one propounded by Senator Cox for his personal benefit. We should stop the suggestion, the vile contemptible insinuation, that we are acting from unworthy motives.

Mark the words, Mr. Speaker: 'We should stop the vile, contemptible insinuation that we are acting from unworthy motives.' So that my hon. friend the Minister of Justice, speaking for the government, attributed to Mr. Blair the charging against his late colleagues not only of an unwise measure, but of unworthy motives; and, as I said before, Mr. Blair has not withdrawn one word of those charges. And yet this government has appointed him to the chairmanship of that railway commission. What further did the Minister of Justice say on that occasion?

If the ex-Minister of Railways and Canals was serious, this is the place, and now is the time to

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make a charge, if he has one to make and to prove it. It is unfair that that expression should be allowed to travel throughout this country and furnish a text for every Tory scribbler who wants to attack the Liberal party. I say now that I defy the hon. gentleman to make or successfully maintain any charge against the government in this connection, and I say that this is the place and now is the time to make good any charge if he has one to make. On the same day, when the hon. gentleman used the expression I have quoted in this House, in another place, under this same roof, a similar expression was used. One could understand that a gentleman, speaking at the time under the influence of the generous hospitality of the leader of the opposition, should so far forget himself in an after-dinner speech as to make use of an expression of that sort, but it is unpardonable on the part of an hon. gentleman who came here carefully prepared to deliver a speech, and in cold blood make such an unfounded insinuation.

Has that insinuation been withdrawn, Mr. Speaker? Are the government able to point to one word of Mr. Blair withdrawing it? Have the government in their possession any written retractation by Mr. Blair of the language he used in that speech? If not, it does seem to me an extraordinary incident that a gentleman who made charges of that kind against his late colleagues should be appointed to a position of trust and confidence without first being called upon to retract those charges and withdraw those insinuations. But that is not all. My hon. friend, who now so worthily fills the position of Solicitor General (Mr. Lemieux) at that time, a private member of the House, although known to be in the confidence of the government, referred to Mr. Blair in these terms:

In fact the temper that permeates the whole speech of the ex-minister shows that the true inwardness of his resignation has not been yet revealed to us. His speech is full of dread and alarm, as it is full of bitterness. It is an onslaught on his colleagues, and it would reflect on the Prime Minister, if we did not know the Prime Minister and his colleagues as well.

Now, let me quote again, in a somewhat different aspect, the language of Mr. Blair, and let us see how far the government were justified, in view of the quotations which I shall give, in appointing this gentleman to the position he now fills. I would have supposed that a man called to act as chairman of the Railway Commission of Canada, a commission with such important duties, such wide functions and jurisdiction, must, at least, in the opinion of the government, be a man whose judgment in matters of transportation would be worth something. I would have supposed that the government would not appoint to that position a man whose judgment was of no value or whose opinion could be influenced by passion or self-interest. We were told during the last session, and we have been told today by the mover and seconder of this address, that this transcontinental railway scheme is one of great value to the country.