

to have asked my hon. friend from North Ontario why it is that with such an abounding prosperity in the country; with the wisest government, according to his view, that could be devised under human conditions, this somewhat singular reversal of opinion should have been experienced. I think it was my hon. friend from Hochelaga (Mr. Rivet) who declared that this government is almost as absolutely perfect as we can expect in this world.

Mr. HAGGART. He shakes his head.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I do not wonder that my hon. friend (Mr. Rivet) disclaims it, and I apologize to him; it was the hon. gentleman from North Ontario (Mr. Grant) who said that the government is as perfect as it humanly can be. And yet with all this abounding prosperity and this immaculate government, what is the secret of this singular reversal of opinion at by-elections which in this country in the past have notoriously gone in favour of the government of the day. My hon. friend the Minister of Customs (Hon. Mr. Pater-son) was very anxious at the close of last session to test this transcontinental railway measure before the people. He was loud in his challenges to us, that on the earliest possible occasion we should come before the electors and debate the Grand Trunk Pacific policy. Well, the hon. gentleman has been in East Lambton, and in East Bruce, and he has had an opportunity of explaining the advantages of this statesmanlike measure with all the force and vigour of which he is so peculiarly capable. But the Minister of Customs only succeeded by his efforts in quadrupling the Conservative majority in East Bruce and in increasing the previous Conservative majority in East Lambton by more than 300 votes. I do not know if the Minister of Customs will be so loudly boastful with his challenges in the future. However, that may be, there is one constituency in Canada which has given its opinion in strong and unmistakable terms as to the merits of this transcontinental railway measure. I refer to the city of St. John now represented by my hon. friend (Mr. Daniel). I suppose that my hon. friends on the government benches are not so sensitive that I may not remind them, that a majority of nearly 1,000 for the Liberal candidate in 1900, has been converted into a majority of nearly 300 for the Conservative candidate in 1904.

And, Mr. Speaker, it does seem to me that the government of this country paid a somewhat big price for the purpose of endeavouring to save themselves in the city of St. John. We know what took place here last session. We know of the resignation of my friend, Mr. Blair, as Minister of Railways and Canals, and we know of the speech which he made during the past session; and I may say, Sir, that in the appointment of

Mr. Blair to be chairman of the railway commission,—a very important tribunal in this country,—we have an extraordinary incident as ever was known in our public affairs. What was the attitude of Mr. Blair with regard to the scheme which was then proposed by the government? His attitude is well known not only in this House but in this country. He had been Minister of Railways from 1896 to the summer 1903. As Minister of Railways he had acquired an experience in respect to transportation matters in Canada which was not possessed by any other member of the cabinet. But when the time came for him to decide whether or not he could support the policy of the government, we found him resigning his portfolio as Minister of Railways, and becoming a private member of this House. And we found something more. We found Mr. Blair denouncing, in the most unmeasured terms the proposal which the government brought down and which he could not support. I shall quote a few of the references of Mr. Blair to the scheme. The legislation of last session created a most important tribunal in this country. That tribunal has judicial functions as important as are exercised by any court known in this land. In appointing a gentleman to the position of chairman of that commission, the government ought to select a man of experience in railway affairs, a man of the utmost possible integrity, a man of calm and reasonable judgment, a man, like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion. Let us consider the action of the government in appointing Mr. Blair to be chairman of that commission in connection with what Mr. Blair said, not only of the measure itself, but of his colleagues in the government. And let us see what possible excuse there could have been for the government appointing that gentleman with these words unrettracted. Last session Mr. Blair said:—

What does the right hon. gentleman mean when he says:

We cannot wait because time does not wait.

I think, Mr. Speaker, and I say it with all respect to my right hon. friend, that it would have been as correct if not so poetic for him to have said: We cannot wait because Senator Cox cannot wait. * * * * It must be because there is an absence of real, good, substantial argument to sustain the case itself, and my hon. friends feel obliged to appeal to the prejudices and feelings, and to arouse the passions of the people of Canada in order to carry through a measure which, on its merits, they would have no hope whatever of carrying.

These are the words of Mr. Blair who has been appointed by this government to the chairmanship of one of the most important judicial tribunals in Canada. And what further have we from the gentleman who has been appointed to this position of trust; as a man possessed of the experience and judgment necessary to fill such a high position. Mr. Blair continued:—