

lize that in your present indifferent state of health such action on my part would cause you much anxiety and embarrassment, and this I would gladly spare you if it were at all possible. I deeply regret, however, that the more I reflect upon the situation the more I find myself constrained to take this step. It is the only course consistent with my view of public duty and what is required of me by my self-respect.

The suggestion which was made to me when I stated to council my inability to become responsible for the policy which the government was apparently determined to adopt with reference to the transcontinental railway project, that I might delegate to some other minister, or that you yourself might take charge of the carriage of the resolutions and measure in parliament, appears to me more impracticable the more I consider it. It does not seem to me possible that, while declaring myself in council as disapproving strongly of the government policy on this question, and therefore unable to support the same in parliament, I could retain my position in the cabinet and avoid the public advocacy of a proposition which it would be especially my duty as Minister of Railways to present to parliament and defend before the country. This course of tacitly accepting a measure which my judgment strongly condemns I consider, on reflection, as neither fair to the government as a body nor just to myself. All inference would be drawn from my silence that I was not favourable to the government policy, and yet that I was not adverse to retaining my ministerial position. I am sure that we all would be placing ourselves, in such a course of conduct, in a false position, and would surely be assailed as committing an open and flagrant breach of a well recognized principle obtaining under our system of responsible government. Neither of us can afford to be a party to such a procedure, and I appeal to you to say whether or not it would not be infinitely better that I should submit to the sacrifice of the office which I have the honour to hold, and in discharging the duties of which I have felt a legitimate pride, while you should be subjected to any embarrassment which might result from my resignation, rather than that we should jointly suffer the reproaches which such an act on our part would necessarily provoke. The measure could not be many hours under consideration before parliament when I should be made to feel the insupportable character of my position, and you would be made to reproach yourself, and our colleagues to reproach themselves, with not having foreseen that this result would be inevitable.

You complained on Saturday, when I intimated my inability to support this scheme, that I had treated you unfairly in not having earlier in the discussion advised you that if this policy were determined upon I would be compelled to withdraw from the administration. I believe you will, on reflection, acquit me of this charge. It would grieve me deeply to think I had not dealt with you in a spirit of the utmost frankness and loyalty throughout the discussion of the question; but with a knowledge of the situation, I could not bring myself to believe that a scheme so objectionable and alarming in many respects would be finally and deliberately adopted by government; and I did not until a few days before Saturday last entertain the least idea that the advice tendered you against hasty and impetuous action would ultimately prevail.

I consider it would have been unbecoming on my part to have even hinted at withdrawal from the cabinet if my views did not prevail, while there were still good reasons for the hope that my opinions would have weight with yourself and our colleagues. When the ground for such hope appeared to be diminishing, which would be at least from two or three weeks ago, I went so far as to say, with all possible gravity, that I could not see how it would be possible for me as Minister of Railways to undertake to present and defend this scheme before parliament, or allow myself to be regarded as the minister primarily responsible for its adoption. The warning I then gave to yourself and my colleagues was going as far as I thought I ought to go at that stage. I intended it as a direct and clear intimation of my attitude upon the question. I think it was made with sufficient impressiveness, and it is not my fault if it was not appreciated by you: It further appears to me that if I had declared my intention of withdrawing from the cabinet while there was still a prospect of this policy not being adopted, you would have considered I was endeavouring to accomplish by threat what I had failed to effect by argument.

I consider that my position with respect to this question differs in an important sense from that of any of my colleagues. As Minister of Railways the public would naturally regard me as having prompted and urged this scheme upon government. I would necessarily have the carriage of the proposal through parliament, and in the nature of things would be by the public regarded as more responsible for the policy than any other minister in the cabinet, excepting perhaps yourself. The brunt of the opposition which would be encountered in the House would have to be borne by me, and the duty of justifying and advocating the measure would largely devolve upon me. Even if I could bring myself to subordinate my personal judgment upon the question for the sake of the party, how could I discharge the duty of advocating and defending the measure without any heart in the cause, and with the strong opinion which I have uniformly entertained that it was not a policy which would be conducive to public interests, nor one which could be safely adopted in the interest of the government itself.

Again, as respects my being open to the charge of want of fairness to yourself, it rather appears to me that an allegation of that character more properly lies at your door. The Grand Trunk proposition had been made to you, and you had consulted with other ministers, and those ministers had met Mr. Hays on several occasions, as I am advised with your knowledge and approval, long before you made me aware that negotiations or discussions on this subject had been entered upon and were being prosecuted. I do not say that I was unaware of them, because information indirectly reached me to that effect; but I do say they had made progress and had been well advanced before my chief had considered it proper or necessary to acquaint me with the facts. I think I might justly complain that so important a matter of policy, arising within the sphere of my own department, should have been conducted and continued in this way behind my back, and without my knowledge. I am not making this the subject of complaint now, and it has not materially influenced my action at the present moment. I believe, if my memory serves me, this is the first occasion I have mentioned the subject to you. I reconciled myself