

members of Council who would think I was over punctilious in declining to pursue that course, and I was glad afterwards that I had mentioned it in the correspondence, because there are many warm personal friends on the government side who, between the time that my resignation was known and the time that the explanations were made, have criticised me because I had not pursued that very same course. I say, therefore, that I very gladly avail myself of the present opportunity to make that matter straight.

The right hon. gentleman has laid before parliament and before the country a statement of the reasons why he has presented this measure to the House, and the defence of that measure. He has given us to understand that this scheme is a scheme devised for the purpose of securing for the people of Canada a great transcontinental railway which will afford to the people of the east and west the shortest and cheapest route for the carriage of their traffic. And at the same time, and in the same connection, my right hon. friend, with a good deal of self-satisfaction I am sure, and with apparently much pride, told us that this great project was to be a grand national all-Canadian line. If such a policy well defined and well considered in all its bearings, and so studied that a just conclusion could be reached that it was a proper and necessary work in the interest of Canada, if such a project surrounded by these conditions were presented to parliament, then one might well be glad that such a venture should be entered upon by the government of the country, and it naturally would excite a very great deal of enthusiasm among the people of all shades of politics.

I followed the right hon. the Prime Minister in the statement which he made with the closest interest; and it is only fair to the right hon. gentleman to say that if the grace of eloquence, if the finest and choicest language, if eloquence coupled as I know it was with the sincerest conviction that the measure was a proper and judicious one; if these things could have carried conviction to the minds of members of parliament, then I say that members of parliament and the country generally would have been impressed by the Prime Minister's presentation of the case. But, Sir, speaking for myself and for myself alone, while I was impressed with the singular ability of the right hon. gentleman, and while I felt that all had been said by him that could be said by anybody, and much more than could have been said by any one else with the same effect; yet, I still felt myself absolutely and entirely unconvinced, and I still felt that the objections which existed in my mind against this measure almost in its entirety had not been removed except but in a very small degree.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. BLAIR.

Hon. Mr. BLAIR. The government of this country, realizing the enormous magnitude of this measure; realizing that it is perhaps a measure without parallel in the history of this country; realizing that no question so momentous in its nature, and involving such large responsibilities on the country had ever been presented to parliament since the confederation of the provinces of British North America; realizing also that this decision and determination to carry this project through, if it could be carried through this parliament, and if the assent of the country could be secured for it; realizing all this, my right hon. friend very naturally felt that the people of the country would expect that some satisfactory explanation should be furnished, as to why, with such unusual and such unexampled haste a measure of this magnitude and this character had been pressed upon them. My right hon. friend, realized this as any one with the same responsibilities and occupying the same position would have realized it, and therefore, we observe that the very first feature of this whole question to which the Prime Minister directed his attention, was to repel if possible the charge, or to answer if possible the accusation which must have entered into the mind of almost everybody from one part of Canada to the other, that this question had been sprung with undue haste and without due deliberation. The right hon. gentleman undertook an answer to that phase of the case, and I will give the House in his own words the answer which he gave. Let me tell the House in the first place, however, what the right hon. gentleman did not say in explanation of his course. He did not deny that there had not been deliberation; he did not affirm that the government of the country had availed itself of all proper sources of information, and had waited until they had exhausted all the means in their power to ascertain what the conditions were in the various portions of the country which this road was to traverse; he did not tell us the need which had arisen for us to jump headlong into a scheme of this kind; he did not tell us that he had summoned to his assistance the wisest counsels which the country could afford; he did not tell us that he had sought the assistance of experts in order to know what the traffic conditions were which would make this railway desirable; he did not even pretend to tell us that he had done these things; but, Sir, I will quote his own language as to what he did say, to repel what was almost a self-accusation. The right hon. gentleman said:

Exception has been taken to the immediate necessity of building such a road, exception has been taken to the policy which we have to suggest for the immediate construction of such a road; but as to the idea itself I have never heard a word of opposition, nor do I believe that such a word will be heard in the debate. The first of these objections, that is to the im-