

asking of legislation to pass with respect to the project known as the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway.

It will naturally occur to the minds of members on both sides of the House that it is a matter of extreme difficulty for me to enter upon a discussion of that question. If I were otherwise disposed to do so, I am unable to do it for the very sufficient reason that that project is not before this House at the present time. Nor do I know, from the remark which was made by the right hon. Prime Minister when he read his statement, the form in which that project will be submitted. But this much I do know, from that statement, that the chief troubles which I felt the government must necessarily experience if it forced on that project, have been adhered to. My objections, I may state briefly—not all of them. I will not enter on the subject at present with any degree of particularity, reserving what I have to say upon it for a later period, when it can be more properly and more sufficiently discussed. My objections were of this character. I objected to the government constructing another government road from Lévis to Moncton. I objected to it because it paralleled the Intercolonial Railway in my opinion, without a doubt. You cannot build a line between the same points without practically paralleling the Intercolonial Railway. However, I will not enter upon any elaboration of that point; I will merely state my position. I object to another government road, even if it does not parallel the Intercolonial Railway. We in the province of New Brunswick are not asking for it, unless there are some who want to see the money spent there, and that class of people, I apprehend, are not a class who will influence largely the action of this government or the legislation of this parliament. Another objection was that I thought we were proceeding with undue haste. I have no hesitation in stating that I am as much in favour of the construction of another transcontinental line as any other member of this parliament; but I am not in favour of impetuously rushing into the construction of a transcontinental line from Quebec, through an unknown country to Winnipeg and the west, until we know something about it—until we have the fullest information about it. The project is one of very great magnitude, and should be dealt with only after the maturest deliberation.

Now, Sir, without having this Bill before us, without being able to do more than simply indicate the order of events, I am going to state now to the House what occurred in connection with my resignation. On Saturday, the 4th of July, I became convinced that it was determined to build a line of government railway from Moncton to Quebec, and to proceed at once with the construction, without surveys, from Quebec to Winnipeg; and, Sir, feeling convinced, know-

Hon. Mr. BLAIR.

ing, in fact, that what my right hon. friend has stated to-day was then decided upon, I caused it to be made known that that policy, not to speak of other features which will be elaborated later, was not a policy to which I could commit myself as a member of the government; that I could not take the responsibility of bringing before parliament, and pressing and urging upon the acceptance of parliament, and calling for the approval of the country, a project of that character. That necessarily would involve and did involve, in the mind of anybody who had heard me, and who knew the position which I felt constrained to take, nothing short of a withdrawal from the government; and on Monday, I conveyed to the right hon. the Prime Minister my resignation as a member of the cabinet, with a written statement accompanying that resignation. I pointed out at the conclusion of my letter that I realized that there was the heavy Bill relating to the Railway Commission which had not yet been fully disposed of in committee, and that, if the right hon. gentleman so wished, and would give the Bill precedence in the order of business in the House, I was willing that my resignation should remain unacted upon until I could assist in putting through that measure. That met with the right hon. gentleman's approval; and at his request I accepted back from him the letter which I had written and the resignation which I had handed to him; and the situation was just as I have stated it, and continued to be, until after that Bill passed the committee. On Friday I had the letter re-written, leaving out what had been said with reference to the Railway Commission Bill, inclosed my resignation with the accompanying letter, and was on the eve of handing it to the Prime Minister, when he did the honour of calling upon me and suggested that I might not act for a day or two, as he desired to think matters over. I was going away on Saturday. I acceded to his suggestion. I did not return till Monday. I expected to have seen him earlier on Monday than I did, and I sent that letter with another with my resignation to him on Monday, the 13th day of July. It remained, as I say, in abeyance during those six or seven days under the circumstances I have mentioned. Now, it is proper and due to this House, and due to myself, that I should put the House in possession of the contents of the communication which on the 10th of July I forwarded to the right hon. the Prime Minister :

Office of the
Minister of Railways and Canals,
Ottawa, 10th July, 1903.

My dear Sir Wilfrid.—Since the statement of my position respecting the transcontinental project was made in council on Saturday last I have been considering the subject from all points of view, in the hope of finding some proper means by which I could avoid the necessity of withdrawing from the cabinet. I fully rea-