

rangement for extending their road to the City of Quebec. And what has been the action of the Government in the matter? So far as we know, the Government have taken no steps to give effect to their intentions, expressed in Parliament during last Session. They began last Session full of fire and zeal, but their zeal appears to have lasted only as long as the Session lasted and to have come to an end with the Session. It would seem, as far as we can know, as if the Government had been compelled by some concealed power to promise what they did. Judging from their activity during the Session, and their inactivity during the recess, we would be led to suppose that they had undertaken an unpleasant duty, which they took occasion to cast off as soon as they could. For my part, I really believe the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Amyot) told the truth when he said his belief was that the Canadian Pacific Railway Company had no intention of carrying their road farther east than Montreal. I concur in the statement made at the time by Sir Charles Tupper and assented to by the hon. the Prime Minister, and reiterated by the hon. the Minister of Public Works, that the best interests of the country required that the port of Quebec should be made the summer terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway; and I add this that the winter port should be in some one of the numerous harbors of the Maritime Provinces. The duty of the Government, as expressed by the Government, was to see that the Canadian Pacific Railway Company should carry out that intention; if they failed, then some other persons should undertake the duty. At all events, it was the duty of the Government to do something in that matter. The Government, to all appearances, have been perfectly idle; they have taken absolutely no steps to do what they said should, in the best interests of the country, be done. Possibly, however, I may be wrong in my surmise; it may be that, although no result has come from any action of theirs, the Government have been very active, and in order to see how the case stands, I beg to move for these papers.

Sir HECTOR LANGEVIN. The papers, of course, will be brought down, and I think that it would have been better for the hon. gentleman to have waited until the papers had been brought down. He would then see what has been done, and would probably avoid making some of the statements he has just made. Of course nobody can find fault with the manner in which the hon. gentleman made those statements. They are exactly in accordance with his way of making statements before the House. Of course we cannot find fault with that, but I think it would serve no purpose just now to undertake a discussion on this point before all the papers are brought down. They will be brought down as soon as possible.

Motion agreed to.

RESIGNATION OF CHIEF JUSTICE MEREDITH

Mr. LAURIER moved for:

Copy of the resignation of the Honorable Judge Meredith as Chief Justice of the Superior Court of the Province of Quebec, and of the correspondence which followed that resignation.

He said: Mr. Justice Meredith tendered his resignation in the month of September to the Government, as Chief Justice of the Superior Court of the Province of Quebec. I may be permitted to say at once that the resignation of Mr. Justice Meredith is a great loss to the public of the Province of Quebec. Courteous in manner, of genial disposition, with a high judicial mind, with a vast knowledge of the law, and a spotless character, the Hon. Chief Justice Meredith was a credit to the bench and enjoyed the universal respect of all classes in Lower Canada. Unfortunately the health of Mr. Justice Meredith had been failing some time, and some months previously he had received and accepted a leave of absence. At the expiration of his

leave of absence, in the month of September, finding that his health was still impaired, and that, in all probability, he could not again ascend the bench, he sent in his resignation. If I am correctly informed the Government asked the hon. judge to withdraw his resignation and to accept a further leave of absence for six months. But the very high sense of honor of the hon. judge would not allow him to accept what was tendered. He persisted in his resignation, and ever since the office has been vacant. Five months have elapsed since then and the office is still vacant. Now, I submit it to the sense of the House and it must be apparent to everybody, without argument, that this state of things is highly detrimental to the public at large, and constitutes a great wrong to the other judges whose duties are thereby increased. It must be apparent to everybody, without any argument on my part, that a court which is composed of something like twenty-eight judges cannot work as harmoniously and effectively towards the public as it would, if it were presided over by a Chief Justice, and I put it to the Government and the sense of the House as well that there is no excuse whatever for so long a delay in making the appointment to the important office of Chief Justice of the Province of Quebec. Lawyers are not a scarce article in that Province and there could be no very great difficulty in making a choice, and though in the Province to which I belong the practice has not been followed of making appointments without regard to party, as is done in Ontario, still I submit that in the ranks of the Conservative party of Quebec—since a judge must be selected from the ranks of the Conservative party—it would be easy to find men perfectly competent to become worthy successors of the Hon. Chief Justice Meredith, whether from judges on the bench, or from members of the bar. If I must give the whole of my belief, I must say that I believe that no appointment has yet been made, simply because there have been some political intrigues at the bottom. I would be sorry to believe this, but I cannot see any public motive that can be given as a reason why this office has been kept vacant so long. If any can be given, I would, for my part, be ready and willing to accept it and also be happy to accept it. But, in the meantime, I must call attention to this state of things and say to the Government that it is their imperious duty to make this appointment without any delay—not simply ere long, but without any delay at all.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I can heartily agree with the remarks of my hon. friend respecting the character and standing of Chief Justice Meredith, the great advantage it was to the Province of Quebec to have such a man at the head of the judiciary, and the corresponding loss it was when, from advancing age and ill health, he was obliged to retire. The hon. gentleman has, I think, correctly stated the facts concerning the resignation of the Chief Justice. He and I were neighbors at Rivière du Loup during last summer. He came to see me, and said that, after receiving the views of his medical men and in accordance with his own opinion as to his health, he could not perform his duties satisfactorily to himself. I was exceedingly distressed, I may say, because he was an old personal friend of mine, and, on that ground, and in consequence of my acquaintance with his great abilities and his distinguished standing as a judge, I was extremely sorry to receive the information. I pressed him to try to go on for a few months longer. I said: "I have no doubt that, with the universal feeling that you should remain at your post, the country will accept the action of the Government in giving you, say, six months' longer leave." He said: "I have had a long leave of nine months, which, with my vacation, amounts to nearly a year, and I do not think that I can apply for a further extension of leave." I said: "I am so satisfied that you ought to remain if you can that, if you think another six