

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax). Will the hon. gentleman be good enough to state what business we may expect to-morrow?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. After the ministerial explanations, which are set down as a special government order, Supply will be moved, and the Minister of the Interior will resume his estimates.

Motion agreed to, and House adjourned at 1.40 a.m., Thursday.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THURSDAY, July 16, 1903.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

### RESIGNATION OF THE HON. MR. BLAIR.

On the Orders of the Day being called,

The PRIME MINISTER (Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier). It is my duty to give to the House the explanations to which it is entitled concerning the resignation of my hon. friend the member for the city of St. John, N.B. (Hon. Mr. Blair), as member of the cabinet and Minister of Railways.

In view of the rapid development of the country, of the flood of immigration into the fertile section west of Lake Superior, of the industrial movement in the older provinces, the government have come to the conclusion that a new transcontinental railway, between the east and the west to the Pacific ocean, has become a necessity. To this view the hon. member has always expressed his assent, but a difference of opinion arose between him and his colleagues as to the mode of construction and operation.

No final plan has yet been adopted, though a basis has been reached for the construction of a line to be built and owned by the government through a commission, but to be operated by a company under special provisions to make it a common highway to all railway companies from Moncton to Winnipeg, and for the construction of a line to be built by a company with the assistance of the government from Winnipeg to the Pacific ocean at Port Simpson.

To this plan the hon. member has two objections:

1. To the construction of that section of the above mentioned line lying between Moncton and Quebec, he being of the opinion that such a line would parallel the Intercolonial Railway, an opinion from which we entirely dissent.

2. To the immediate construction of the section between Quebec and the Pacific ocean and to the suggested mode of construction.

Hon. Mr. FIELDING.

In consequence of this difference of opinion between his colleagues and himself, the hon. member, on the 10th instant, tendered his resignation to the Prime Minister. Conferences then took place between the Prime Minister, with the assistance of one of his colleagues, and the hon. member, and finally, on the 14th, his resignation was accepted.

The Prime Minister, whilst expressing for himself and the other members of the administration his great regret at the severance from the cabinet of an able colleague, is happy to believe that the hon. member, upon all questions of public policy, except this one, is in accord with the government.

Hon. A. G. BLAIR (St. John City). Mr. Speaker, the right hon. Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) having made the statement and explanation referring to my withdrawal from the cabinet it is my privilege, and I think it becomes my duty to make a statement as the retiring minister in my own behalf. I am not unaware, Mr. Speaker, that the step which I have taken is one of the gravest possible character. I regret as much as any gentleman on this side of the House can regret, the severing of the ties which have existed between myself and my colleagues since my entry into the administration. I can well realize that the effect of cabinet changes at this moment will not only tend to delay and protract the business of an already very prolonged session, but will occasion very much embarrassment to the party, and will be a source of anxiety to the Prime Minister himself, a thing which above all I would gladly avoid.

The step which I have taken, Sir, can only be justified in respect of my duty to my constituency; of my duty to the party; of my duty to this House and of my duty to the country, upon the clearest and plainest and strongest grounds. And, Sir, I think I will be in the judgment of every member of this House when I say, that such a course on my part must have been taken by impulsion of the gravest character. No minister filling a distinguished position in the cabinet would hastily and lightly cast aside his position, the influence and the advantages which it legitimately carries with it, and all that that change implies.

For myself personally, I have endeavoured while I have filled this office to discharge its duties in a manner which would not only redound to my own individual credit, but which would be of benefit to the country as a whole. And, Sir, I have not spared time nor labour to achieve these results. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, the step which I have felt called upon to take, I have taken in no light or in no frivolous way. I have not acted in any spirit of caprice, although I find the statement generally made that I have. I have not acted because of any pique, nor for any small sized feeling of such a character. I have left the administration for reasons which I am bound to