



MINISTERS OFFICE

OTTAWA

November 11th., 1916.

Dear Sir Robert,-

35887

Your letter of November 9th., is to hand and it affords me much satisfaction to now tender you my resignation; indeed my letter of November 1st., rendered it impossible for me to remain your colleague unless you concurred in its correctness.

For a long time I have retained the portfolio of Militia only that I might the better help the soldiers in training and at the Front and to do the best I could towards winning the war, which is all that mattered. I have closed my eyes to the petty intrigues and ambitions about me. It is my intention still to devote my energies to the interests of those who have done so much to maintain the great cause of Human Liberty.

It is not necessary to analyze, in detail, all disappointing matters in my association with you. You state in the second paragraph of your letter of November 9th.,-

"I have done my utmost to support you in the
"administration of your department."

This is pleasing news to me, but I learn it now for the first time.

Your statement that I had a -

"strong tendency to assume powers which you do not
"possess and which can only be exercised by the
"Governor in Council."

is, also, news to me. True, from the opening of Valcartier camp such things were done with your full knowledge and authority. Upon my representations to you that the formation of the Force would be seriously delayed were every petty detail to be brought before Privy Council, you acquiesced in my recommendation that we should proceed without Orders-in-Council in matters of urgency and that they should be passed afterwards. This was done and has never been deviated from. War cannot be successfully waged on the tactics of a law suit.

Your statement that -

"my time and energies, although urgently needed for much
"more important duties have been very frequently employed
"in removing difficulties thus unnecessarily created."

is, also, news to me. Why was I not informed of it? If you mean your time was given up to listening to the complaints of disappointed or overstrung people - I can understand it. In war time, in all countries, criticism of all measures abounds. In the eyes of some, everything done is "wrong". I too had more than my fair share of uninformed criticism even from well meaning friends.



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Sir Robert Borden

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which you have now carried out, were under contemplation. I was further assured, the first week of August of this year, that the plans were practically completed. However, as you had not spoken to me about it, as in honour bound, I did not credit the stories. True to your suggestion and to our understanding regarding the formation of the proposed Sub-Militia Council, and wishing to make it as perfect as possible, I pursued the course outlined in my letter of November 1st., The organization had to be put into shape and tested out. That had not been completed when I left England. Therefore your position on this is untenable. I had observed your every wish. Further, you were notified, and every one connected with the proposed Sub-Militia Council was definitely notified, not once, but repeatedly, that the whole proposition was tentative and certainly would be changed as circumstances developed. This will be borne out by everyone associated with the proposed Sub-Militia Council. I am free to admit, however, that the question of a separate Minister of Militia in England never once presented itself to my imagination. There is no more need for a separate Minister of Militia for the Forces in England than there is for those at Camp Borden, Camp Hughes, or any other large Camp in the country.

You state -

"I conveyed to you on the 31st., July a clear intimation that upon so important a proposal involving considerations of the gravest moment, the Cabinet must be consulted before action was taken. All the Members of the Government have full and direct responsibility in respect to the very important matters which the proposed Council would advise upon and direct. The intimation which was given to you in my telegram of 31st., July should not have been necessary. As soon as it was received you proceeded to disregard it."

The first sentences of this quotation are absolutely true; and it is my belief that had you been actuated by the best interests of the Force, instead of favoritism, that cablegram would not have been despatched. Your second statement, that - J.S.

"As soon as it was received you proceeded to disregard it,"

I think you must now be convinced this is a grave error on your part.

You were notified the very first instant any temporary conclusion was arrived at.

I am not aware that -

"the principle of joint responsibility upon which Constitutional Government is based"

requires that anyone should be privileged, even unintentionally, to misrepresent facts concerning another. Therefore my letter of November 1st., may, while absolutely true, seem, in this regard, emphatic.

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Sir Robert Borden

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You take exception to the general character and tone of that letter. Well Sir Robert, each one's manner is his own. It might be well if we could all possess your soft mannerism, but I am very much afraid, judging by all periods of history, that human liberty and human progress would not make much advance, as they never have made such advance, under such diplomatic forms and utterances.

I have perused my letter of November 1st., very carefully and I have, also, perused yours of October 31st. Your actions and manner to me at any period in the past, excepting when you would be in trouble in the Opposition days and since, while, as a rule, courteous, have never been apparently frank or loyal. Even in the early Opposition days when a very few of us repeatedly stood by you and overthrew the agitations against you, you rewarded loyalty by preferring those who had been untrue to you.

As I said in the early part of this letter, I have, for a long time, remained Minister of Militia, as scores of my intimate friends know, upon their urgent request, to remain in office in order the better to help, to upbuild, and to protect the interests of our soldiers overseas. As you know my great desire has been to see that Canadian soldiers enjoyed a status as such.

In conclusion, Sir Robert, let me say I have always been frank and honourable with you. When rumours would reach me of your supposed plans of retiring from politics and of your going to the High Commissionership, or to be Chief Justice of Canada, or to be on the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as Colonial Representative, or any other statement seriously affecting you or your political honour, which bound you to the Party, and that you should not use your position to forward your own personal ends, I have promptly consulted you, and you have, as promptly, given your explanations or denials. Recently I heard, on excellent authority, that you had it in contemplation for some time to retire to the Supreme Court of Canada by arrangement with the present incumbent of the Chief Justiceship and hand over the Prime Ministership to another under whom it is well known I would not serve. Surely you could not be a party to any such manipulation, but would face the electors and stand or fall by the result.

I therefore most unhesitatingly tender you my resignation to take effect so soon as I can remove my belongings from the Department, of which I shall give you prompt notice. For the future, permit me to say, that it shall afford me pleasure to support every act, every proposition, coming from where it may, which will tend towards the successful protection and welfare of the soldiers who are so manfully sacrificing themselves in the great cause of Human Liberty.

Sincerely yours

The Right Honourable,
Sir Robert L. Borden, G.C.M.G.,
Prime Minister of Canada,
Ottawa.