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Editorial and News Telephone 133a. Office Hours 12 noon to 6 p.m.; 8 to 12 p.m. J. R. B. MCCREARY, Editor Residence Telephone 32

THE MORNING GUARDIAN

TUESDAY, SEPT. 29, 1903.

MR. BLAIR'S POSITION.

The interview with Hon. Mr. Blair published in our issue of Monday was doubtless read with much interest by those of our readers who are following the course of federal affairs. Since the late Minister of Railways resigned that official position there has been much speculation as to his future attitude toward his late colleagues and the Liberal party. The uncertainty in the public mind was increased by Mr. Blair's prolonged silence after his great speech in opposition to the railway agreements. Other elements which were puzzling to the general public were the somewhat wavering attitude of the St. John Telegraph and other ministerial journals. The Telegraph was understood to sustain pretty close relations with the ex-Minister and followed him in his opposition to the Grand Trunk scheme down to the time of the bill's second reading, and since, after a period of silence on that topic, has resumed its strenuous opposition thereto.

But if the Telegraph wavered somewhat in that regard, other ministerial journals were quite as erratic in their attitude towards Mr. Blair. Several of their number, including the Halifax Chronicle, at first denounced the retired minister in unmeasured terms and then suddenly lapsed into silence on that topic. There was every indication that they had been "called off" and reminded that the interest of the party demanded more respectful treatment for Mr. Blair. It was extremely difficult for the general public under these circumstances to make up their minds as to what the future relations between Mr. Blair and his late colleagues were likely to be. Would he go in opposition, or take office and retire from public life? Would he follow up his active opposition to the Grand Trunk scheme, or content himself with his one great speech in denunciation of that measure? Such were some of the questions which were asked on every hand.

Mr. Blair in the interview referred to has defined his position in part, but leaves the public still in doubt in regard to some important points. He disclaims having any inspired organ and asks to be judged only by what he himself says and does. This is quite proper and dignified but not very enlightening. But when Mr. Blair tells us that he has not changed his views in regard to the Grand Trunk scheme since his speech in Parliament he sounds

a decided note and reaffirms his attitude of strong opposition to that measure. His reasons for remaining silent during the subsequent debate are certainly intelligible and plausible. He chose to rest his case on his one speech and to avoid "an unpleasant series of controversies with his former colleagues and not accentuate the disagreement, especially as in all other questions he is in accord with them."

We have this much more clear: Mr. Blair, while as much opposed to the Grand Trunk scheme as ever, is still in accord with his late colleagues on all other questions. He is still a Liberal, and loyal to his party. He will not join the Opposition in its open efforts to defeat the Laurier Administration. But what Mr. Blair has not told us, and that many people would like to know, is whether or not he intends to remain in political life, and whether he will make the same earnest effort to defeat the Grand Trunk scheme at the polls as he made in Parliament. There are many who think he is logically and in good conscience bound to still do his utmost by advocacy and organization to defeat the railway scheme: the polls, if it shall not be defeated in the Senate. Possibly Mr. Blair may not so understand his duty. In the meantime his statement of full accord with his late colleagues on all other questions than this one looks a little like preparing the way for a full reconciliation in the not distant future. A fortunate defeat of the railway scheme by the Senate would make this easy.

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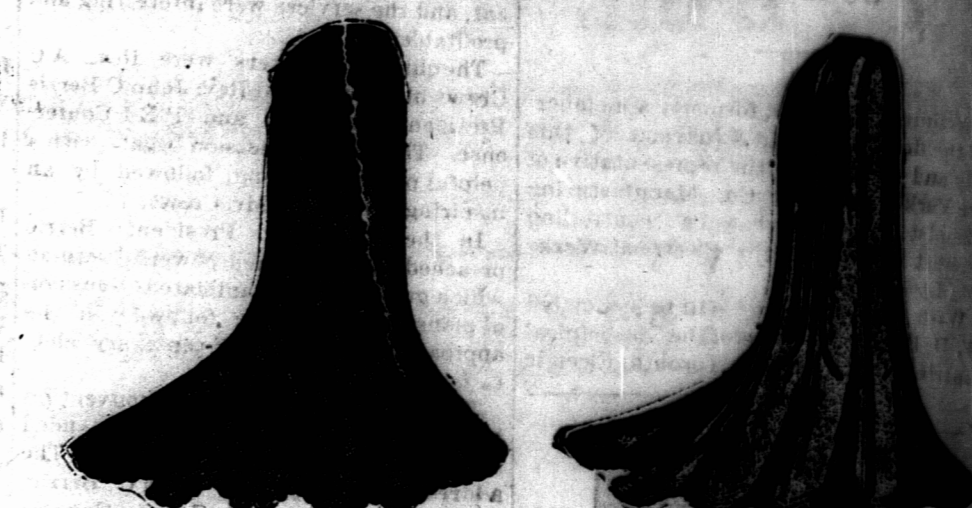
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