

titles question as one of non-confidence. The motions on the subject had been brought forward by friends of the Government, who were justified in believing that they and their fellow members were free, as representatives of the people, to speak and vote in accordance with their convictions. There was not a word in the resolution, or in the amendment, or in any of the speeches in support of them, that raised any question of want of confidence. The movers of the two resolutions well knew, as the public knew, that the Government were strong in the House, and that nobody was thinking of any change of Government. Why then should the Premier make the question one for a party division? He had at the first stage of the discussion recognized the question as a proper one for open discussion, and thus had encouraged his followers into the frank expression of their views. He could, with perfect propriety, have left the matter in that shape, allowing those who approved of titles and those who disapproved of them, to speak their minds freely and vote as they deemed right. A vote reached in that way would have disturbed nobody. When Sir Robert startled the House by demanding that the question be made one of want of confidence, he obtained a majority, it is true, but it was a reduced majority, and many of those who voted with him did so with hardly concealed indignation at the manner in which they had been treated. It was a vote which weakened the Government at a time when it could easily have been strong.

A very zealous, if not very courteous, writer in the editorial columns of the Ottawa Journal, defending the Premier and assailing those who differed from him, bases the defence chiefly on the allegation that the issue concerning titles was a "petty enough thing." That which our contemporary regards as its strongest ground of excuse for the Premier's course is really one of the strongest reasons why he should not have interfered as he did. The "issue" certainly was not a grand one. Why then did Sir Robert make it grand? One can conceive of circumstances in which the presence of a great issue would justify a Premier in treating it as one, the fate of which must affect the Government. The Conscription Bill, for example, was a great issue. In such a case the Premier could reasonably say to the House: "You have entrusted my colleagues and myself with the Government of the Dominion at this time. We regard this Conscription Bill as one of the instruments absolutely necessary for the carrying on of our part in the war. We cannot discharge our duty, as we understand it, without this instrument. Therefore we must ask the House to give us this Bill or we must make way for others." To such an appeal even members who were doubtful of the wisdom of the Conscription Bill might well give a favorable response. The greatness of the issue, the pressure of the Military situation, would be justification for the course taken. Even then, however, it would be only fair to have the Government's position declared at the earliest possible moment of the discussion. In the present case, there was no great issue, but one that the Ottawa writer calls "petty." On that petty question the friends of the Government, for a long time after the motion was placed on the notice paper, and for several weeks after the first stage of discussion, were left free to think and to speak their minds. At the eleventh hour, after many men had, both in public and in private, declared their intentions on the subject, the Premier made this petty issue a grand one, and called upon the

men who had already declared their minds to take back all that they had said and vote against their convictions. It was not a wise course. The situation afforded neither reason nor excuse for it. It was a step that unnecessarily weakened Union Government, and destroyed, for the time at least, the independence of the people's House of Commons.

Labor

OUR labor leaders in some quarters are manifesting less regard for public interests, less regard for the conditions arising from the war, than their brethren in Great Britain. The British labor organizations have, on the whole, responded very loyally to the needs of the war. Many in Canada have done likewise, but there have been too many exceptions. The firemen's strike in Winnipeg, and the shipyard strike in British Columbia are indefensible at such a time as this. We need a Gompers here who can guide the labor forces wisely, claiming fair play for the workmen and requiring fair play from them to the public.

Where Autocracy Succeeds

IT is too late to discuss whether or not Canada should enter upon an extensive policy of nationalizing the railways of the country. The thing has already been done to a considerable extent. The Government already have the Intercolonial, the Prince Edward Island, the section of the Grand Trunk Pacific from Moncton to Winnipeg, and the whole Canadian Northern system, extending to the Pacific Ocean. The announcement that the Government are endeavoring to acquire the Grand Trunk Pacific from Winnipeg to Prince Rupert, and also the parent Grand Trunk system in Ontario and Quebec, has called forth much approval and but little adverse comment. Nationalization in a large way is therefore with us, and likely to grow.

All are interested, however, in endeavoring to understand just how the system is likely to work. We have on more than one occasion remarked that nationalization of railways could be made more efficient under an autocratic government than in a country where democracy rules. The chief advocates of the system in Canada have insisted, as an essential feature, that what is called political influence—the influence of the people's representatives in Parliament—must be excluded from the management. It is easy enough to state this as a necessary condition, but, as we have several times pointed out, it will not be found easy to keep political influence out of anything in which the money of the people supplies the motive power. Those who are so confident that our national roads will be managed without political interference will do well to take note of the conclusion reached by Sir William Wilson Hay, General Manager of South African railways and harbors, in his testimony before the South African Mining Commission. Sir William stated very fairly the advantages and the disadvantages of public ownership. In conclusion, he said:

"The success or otherwise of State railways is influenced largely by the

extent to which the management is freed from political influence. It is thus manifest that the problem is governed by many elements other than the purely economic.

"Experience shows that politics do creep into all State managements, irrespective of the statutory or other safeguards applied, as in the case of Australia and Italy, and that the only managements immune from interference are the autocracies of Germany and Hungary."

Long and Shortt in Ireland

THE Irish question takes on new shapes from day to day. The Nationalists and the Sinn Fein, after mingling for a little while in a common attack on the proposed conscription, have broken again, a feature of the situation that should be gratifying to all those who have sympathized with the legitimate demand for Home Rule made by the Nationalists under the late John Redmond. The Sinn Fein have been discovered in new conspiracies with the German enemy and many of the leaders of the disloyal Irish have been arrested. Meanwhile, some strange things are happening, Lord Wimborne, having tired of his position of Lord Lieutenant, Lord French, who is believed to be in sympathy with Home Rule, has been appointed his successor. While the Lord Lieutenant is the official head of the Irish Government, the real director of Irish policy is the Secretary for Ireland. Mr. Duke, who had for some months filled that important office, having been appointed to a judgeship, Mr. Shortt, a Liberal Unionist, who very recently voted against the Lloyd George Government, has been named as Secretary. This move was expected to be regarded by the Nationalists as a conciliatory one, and so it was for the moment. But the Nationalists are now alarmed because Mr. Walter H. Long, the Colonial Secretary, has been sent to Ireland to co-operate with Mr. Shortt in the handling of Irish business. Mr. Long is a typical Tory of the old school, a good representative of the country gentlemen who in times that are passing formed the bone and sinew of British Conservatism. Mr. Long held several offices in Conservative Governments, and always distinguished himself by his strong hostility to every Irish movement looking towards Home Rule. His coming so prominently into the Irish situation at this critical time is therefore viewed with suspicion by the Nationalists.

It is just possible, however, that Mr. Long's visit may prove very helpful to the Home Rule cause. Mr. Lloyd George's recent positive, though perhaps premature, announcement that his Government would bring in a new Home Rule measure, must be taken as an evidence that there has been some revision of opinion on that question among his Conservative colleagues. If so strong an anti-Home Ruler as Mr. Long has at last made up his mind that some measure of Home Rule is inevitable, and he is prepared to work with Mr. Shortt in the preparation of the new bill, his action will be of the utmost importance. Mr. Long is a man of large influence in the Conservative section of the party which supports the present Government. If he has given up the fight against Home Rule the triumph of that cause is not far away.

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