

## PROMISE AND PERFORMANCE.

### The Borden Halifax Platform and the Borden Government Record compared.

ON questions of public policy, on matters of trade, tariff, defence, transportation and the like there is room for honest and legitimate difference of opinion between the two great political parties in Canada. But on the question of honesty, honor and decency in the public men and in the public affairs of Canada there can only be one sound policy and one right standard. The lack of brilliant statesmanship, mistakes of policy or of administration may be excused or condoned in public men. For failure to observe in public life the common virtues of honest dealing there is no excuse, except moral cowardice.

There were fine promises of political rectitude in Mr. Borden's pre-election platform. There was fine scorn of all electoral chicanery or wrong-doing. A public prosecutor for the exposure and punishment of all crookedness in elections was urged; and by-elections were to be brought on within at least three months of the time a seat became vacant. There was scathing denunciation of patronage evils and a demand for extension of the Civil Service Act to the outside service with merit to be the only rule of appointment or promotion. There were high-sounding phrases about the conservation of the public domain for the people, about honesty and economy in the expenditure of the people's money, about clean administration and the elimination of all graft. For the most part the electors believed Mr. Borden and took his promises in good faith. That faith has been disabused. The promises have been unkept. The old reputation of Mr. Borden for sincerity and square-dealing does not now pass unquestioned even among staunch Conservatives.

#### Compromise and Expediency.

The first surrender of principles came with the alliance with the Nationalists in 1910. Ever since, Mr. Borden has been paying the penalty of that alliance. The coils have steadily tightened round him from the very first. The alliance with the Big Interests in the reciprocity campaign of 1911, the consequent collection of a huge campaign fund and the development of machine politics were natural steps after the first great surrender.

The fulfilment of the bargain with the Nationalists is the story of the bogus emergency and the hedging and twisting in order to avoid any declaration of permanent policy on the question of naval defence. In its train it brought closure and the arbitrary and unconstitutional restriction of the rights of free speech in Parliament by the people's representatives. British freedom, British constitutional usage and British fair-play were all sacrificed to the self-interest of the men who desired to hold office at all costs.

The fulfilment of the bargain with the Big Interests has been steadily carried out at the expense of the common people. The tariff law has been so rigidly and literally enforced that over one per cent has been added to the average percentage of duty collected on imports. The Anti-Combines law has become a dead letter. Labor complains that the sympathies of the Government are obviously with Capital where the ap-

plication of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act is concerned. Mackenzie & Mann have already been given \$15,000,000 and are coming back for more. There is no prospect of Tariff relief of any kind for the benefit of the common people.

In regard to these general aspects of legislative policy Mr. Borden as the head of the Government must stand convicted of deliberately setting the interests of party politics and of party friends before the interests of country.

#### Fraudulent Elections.

But it is in the concrete instances of electoral corruption, of machine politics and of administrative dishonesty that the conflict between Mr. Borden's pre-election promises and his post-election performance can best be gauged. Practically every principle enunciated on the Halifax platform and every pledge given to the electors has been violated by one or other of his ministers. And for every violation Mr. Borden stands responsible, for he has either allowed, or condoned, or defended the offence.

What of the promise of electoral purity and fair and honest elections? In South Renfrew and Richelieu a most deliberate attempt was made by ministers of the Crown to bribe the electors by wholesale promises of public expenditures in the ridings if the Government candidate were elected. In Richelieu, Sir Rodolphe Forget boldly declared on the public platform that the Minister of Public Works had promised to build a railway if the vote went right. In Macdonald the joint efforts of Hon. Robert Rogers and Sir Rodmond Roblin did not stop short of jailing Liberal workers on sight. Yet when investigation in the courts was asked there was no talk from Mr. Borden about speedy punishment or thorough enquiry by "A public prosecutor". Instead, after delaying the election trial on technicalities as long as possible the investigation was burked by a blanket confession of irregularities and the lid was kept down. In Hochelaga when Hon. Louis Coderre won out with the aid of systematic personation and bribery by cash and patronage, public investigation was again burked and Mr. Borden himself led the attempt to prevent any disclosures in Parliament or in the courts. In the Provincial by-election in Antigonish, N.S., brazen bribery went so far as to actually publish a list of public works estimates for the constituency. The total was nearly two hundred thousand dollars and the list was published before the estimates had even been passed upon by the Cabinet Council, let alone having been presented to Parliament. In Chateauguay the trail of the Rogers election machine was over every foot of the riding. The evidence is glaring and convincing and Mr. Borden must know it. Yet when a protest is entered the usual resorts are had to delaying investigation on legal technicalities and it is blandly announced in the Government press that appeals on points of law are likely to be taken both on the main and on the cross petitions, thus delaying the actual investigation for months. There has not been a single by-election