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AN EARLY WARNING.

SIR ROBERT BORDEN'S declarations that the revelations of Middleman graft in war contracts came as a complete surprise to himself and the members of his Government lost considerable weight when it was asserted in Parliament that he had been warned of these abuses within a few weeks after the first contracts were let. The reference was to certain correspondence addressed by the officials of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association to the Premier. Sir Robert was requested more than once to bring this correspondence before the House, but failed to do so. It was not until the annual meeting of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association was held in Toronto that the facts as to this correspondence were made public. The report of the Executive Committee, presented on June 9, showed how plain was the warning given to Premier Borden. It said:

"On October 23, a letter was addressed to the Premier pointing out that the method of handling War orders was giving rise to a good deal of dissatisfaction. He was informed that, making all due allowance for the fact that some manufacturers might not have had the necessary equipment and that others might not have been able to guarantee satisfactory deliveries, it was apparently true that some had more than their share of business while others had gone without. In some quarters the impression seemed to prevail that War material could not be sold to the Government on its merits, but only through influence, and it was accordingly suggested to the Premier that the business should be thrown wide open and placed as far as possible with manufacturers or producers direct, **instead of through middlemen**, thus insuring competitive prices and at the same time giving the Government the satisfaction of dealing with responsible parties."

The course pursued by the Government for months after this formal protest to the Premier is the best proof that the warning went unheeded. The only inference to be drawn is that the infamous patronage system was deliberately allowed to apply to War contracts.

RESPECT FOR THE PREMIER.

ON the last day of the recent session of Parliament, Sir Robert Borden made an impressive speech in which he declared his profound sorrow at the revelations of graft in connection with War contracts and proceeded to voice his disapproval of the actions of two Conservative members, Mr. Foster of Kings, N.S. and Mr. W. F. Garland of Carleton, Ont. Conservative newspapers throughout Canada united immediately in a chorus of praise of the Premier and construed his utterance to mean that both members had been "read out" of the Conservative party. Just how far it meant anything of the kind and just how much importance can be attached to the speech of Sir Robert Borden can probably best be judged by the subsequent actions of the two men named. Mr. Foster, who resigned his seat, is again looking for the nomination in Kings and in a signed letter to the press some weeks ago declared that "there will be something of a struggle" before he gives up the idea of securing it. Mr. Garland did not resign. On the contrary he started out the very next week to fight for re-nomination in Carleton and he has been fighting for the nomination ever since. A few days ago he published an advertisement in a paper published in Carleton County in which he publicly appealed for support at the coming convention and warned delegates that "I still hold the patronage of the county." Comment on this would be superfluous.

PROBING THE WAR CONTRACTS.

SIR CHARLES DAVIDSON of Montreal, who recently retired from the office of Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Quebec, has been commissioned by the Dominion Government to institute an investigation into all Canadian contracts for war supplies. The first sitting of the commission is set for June 18. Despite warm declarations from Conservative newspapers that the enquiry is to be "wide open" and that every detail of Government purchase of war materials is to be probed there is no official assurance at the time of this writing as to just what powers have been given the Commissioner nor any detail as to how the inquiry is to be conducted. It is announced that there is first to be a "departmental" inquiry.

When the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons closed its investigation of War contracts last April in order to report to the House before prorogation, assurance was given by the Government that the investigation commenced by the Committee would be continued by the Government during the recess. The public expects that this further investigation should be along the same lines, that it should be open to the light of day and that it should be so conducted that the actual facts may be ascertained. No investigation that falls short of these requirements could be regarded as satisfactory.