

Subject.....

Date.....Publication.....

Compares Positions.

The premier alluded to comparisons which are being made between the position of the Liberal Party today and its position years ago.

"You will recall that when Sir Wilfrid Laurier came into power in 1896, he faced a condition of great depression. It took him time, but year by year he made the change that seemed necessary in the tariff of that day, with the result that we had 15 years of peace, prosperity and plenty—the golden era of the country's prosperity was during these days of Liberal rule. Now we are hoping to be able in the course of time to give to the people, government similar to that, but, ladies and gentlemen, remember that conditions which we face today are vastly different to those which Sir Wilfrid and his colleagues faced in 1896."

The premier pointed out that Sir Wilfrid had substantial majorities, while he himself did not know whether he was in the minority of majority.

"We are on the border line. On an official count I think perhaps with the speaker, it is just even. But we have opposed to us to all appearances, in the groups opposite, more than or as many as are actually sitting on our side. It does not make my position or that of my colleagues any easier. In the matter of policies we cannot do what we would like to do with the same free hand as if we had a strong majority."

Knew His Enemies.

The premier also recalled that Sir Wilfrid's opponents sat directly opposite to him.

"He knew his enemies, he knew who were opposed to him, and he could fight them in open battle before the people. But we have two groups opposed to us and these two groups are more opposed to each other than any other groups in the House. They hate each other. So we have to weigh and consider the result of our actions in every particular. That doesn't make the task of government any easier, and I hope the people will come to realize, as I believe they are beginning to, that for strong and stable government it is much better to have the type of

men who will defend the people's interests grouped together as one strong political body. Then those who care more for the privileges of the few than the rights of the many may align themselves in an opposing other group.

"Let us have a battle, then, between those who stand for the rights of the many as against those who are seeking to keep within their own control the special privileges and gifts of the day."

Notwithstanding its handicap, Mr. King continued, the government had sought to carry out the will of the people, as expressed in Parliament, regardless of political labels. Despite taunts that they had exhibited weakness, the government sought to discover how the House would view their actions and find out what opposing members thought.

Strongly Supported.

"We brought forward our measures and in return received the strongest support any government got since confederation," said the premier. Referring to the majorities of over 100 on the votes on the amendments to the address and the budget. The explanation was that the government sought to embody sound Liberal doctrine in the policies laid down, and its actions had commended itself in the House.

Further instancing the stupendous task which his government had faced, the premier pointed out that when Mr. Fielding took office as finance minister under the Laurier regime, he had to raise only \$40,000,000 in taxation, as compared with \$400,000,000 when the present government took office. The interest on the public debt when Sir Wilfrid Laurier came into power was \$12,000,000 or \$15,000,000 as against \$135,000,000 today. Then the present government had to meet the deficit on National railways, and unlike Sir Wilfrid who succeeded upon an era of peace, the present administration had to provide for pensions, civil re-establishment and land settlement for soldiers, as a consequence of the war.

"None of us begrudge that, but it means increased taxation," commented Mr. King.

Again in Sir Wilfrid's day there were miles upon miles of land to hand out to railway companies for construction purposes, and settlers were attracted from all quarters of the globe by offers of lands which today were pre-empted.

Relieves Taxation.

"Notwithstanding all these differences we have succeeded in a little over two and a half years in so reducing public expenditures and increasing revenue so that we were able to show a surplus of \$35,000,000 and relieve the people of \$25,000,000 in taxation at the last session."

"We have succeeded in uniting the country from the Atlantic to the Pacific. We have helped to restore the old feeling of optimism and confidence and helped to unite the different elements and we believe that, given time to work out our policies, that we will be able to restore that condition, contentment and happiness which was the pride of all Canada in the past, and which will once again be the pride and glory of the Liberal party in carrying on the government of this great nation."

In opening, the premier expressed appreciation for the warmth of the reception accorded him, and the very courteous welcome extended by the mayor, who, although not of the same political color, had stayed to receive him, notwithstanding the fact that Mr. Meighen was addressing a Conservative rally in Stratford.

"It is a proud moment for me when I visit Woodstock," he continued.

W. L. Mackenzie King Papers

Speeches-1922 - 1932

PUBLIC ARCHIVES
ARCHIVES PUBLIQUES
CANADA