

THE LIBERAL WEEKLY

is issued by the Central Information Office of the
Canadian Liberal Party, Hope Chambers, Ottawa.

One Year \$1.00--Three Months 25c.

HON. EDWARD BLAKE LOATHED INIQUITY.

He provided that Australia would not have a Franchise Act like unto Canada's Acts of 1885 and 1917.

In 1900 the Imperial Parliament passed The Commonwealth of Australia Act which is to Australia its constitution just as the British North America Act is the Constitution of Canada. The Provinces in Australia are called States, and the Commonwealth and the several states have a House of Representatives, (the more numerous houses) and, a Senate just as Canada has a House of Commons and a Senate.

The Franchise used in the Commonwealth elections is the franchise of the several States, but in this the Constitution of Australia differs from that of Canada in that the Commonwealth cannot prevent any person qualified to vote under state law from voting. This is clearly set forth in Article 41 of the Australian Constitution which reads as follows:—

"No adult person who has or acquires a right to vote at elections for the more numerous House of the Parliament of a State, shall, while the right continues be prevented by any law of the Commonwealth from voting at elections for either House of the Parliament of the Commonwealth."

There could be no such Act as War-Time Elections Act of Canada passed by the Australian Commonwealth and in any election held there by the Commonwealth every person who is entitled to vote by State law is entitled to vote. When Australia was granted its constitution in 1900 the Imperial Parliament had before it the Canadian Dominion Franchise law passed by the Conservatives in 1885 which discarded the Provincial lists used up to that time in Federal elections and provided for the preparation of Federal lists by revising Barristers and they also had before them repeal of the same in 1898 by Parliament under Sir Wilfrid Laurier's leadership. The Imperial Parliament therefore provided for Australia that there should be no such law as the Canadian Franchise Act of 1885 and the War-time Elections Act of 1917. Australia owes this to the late Hon. Edward Blake, leader of the Federal Liberal Party, who in 1887 was defeated in Canada by the iniquitous Franchise Act, but in 1900 he was in the Imperial Parliament and took a great interest in the framing of the Constitution of Australia. He was as a matter of fact one of the Commissioners specially appointed to frame the Australian Constitution. His soul loathed the iniquity of 1885 and its practical effect in 1887 but he was dead before the greater iniquity of 1917—the War-time Elections Act was placed upon the Canadian Statute Book. Had there been no power to pass such an Act as the 1917 Act, Canada would not have conscription without a referendum or a fair appeal to the electors.

THE WAR-TIMES ELECTION ACT.

The following editorial appeared in "The Morning Leader" of Regina, of December 19th, 1917, and is somewhat significant in view of the fact that the "Leader" supported the Union Government in the recent contest.

"Now that the elections are over, and the results of the polling are fairly complete, one thing stands out with startling clearness, and that is, that not only was the War-Time Elections Act a huge mistake but it was absolutely unnecessary even as a political weapon.

Perhaps no one Province in Canada was harder hit by that un-British and utterly disgraceful piece of legislation than was the Province of Saskatchewan. Nothing in the past political history of this country so aroused and antagonized our people, British-born and foreign-born, Liberal and Conservative, Protestant and Roman Catholic, as that "scrap of paper" enactment. Feeling over the defeat of Reciprocity by the Eastern Tories was as nothing compared to the feeling existing in this Western country against the War-Time Elections Act.

The opposition to Union Government engendered among many Liberals was almost solely because of the fact that, included in that Government was the author of, and certain other ministers responsible for, this blot on the statute books of Canada. Not only did they resent the violation of Canada's pledged word involved by that Act, and the absolutely vicious machinery for manipulating elections provided in it, but they regretted and condemned the assumption on the part of the Tories at Ottawa that the people so disfranchised were disloyal to Canada and could not be trusted to exercise the franchise. Furthermore, there was a feeling, frequently expressed, that it was designed as a dodge by the East to curtail and cripple the growing political power of the West.

It was because of this War-Time Elections Act, therefore, that so many Liberals opposed Union Government. Most of these Liberals were supporters of conscription; a large percentage of them were prepared to let tariff and economic questions remain in abeyance until we won the war; most of them were willing to give the Union Government a chance to make good in curbing the profiteers, removing political favoritism from the army and Government generally, and remedying the wholesale abuses which flourished under the old Borden Conservative Government. But they would not even appear to approve of the War-Time Elections Act. It was this Act, more than any and all other things, that aroused opposition to the Government. Had it not been for that Act it is safe to say that the number of acclamations in this Province would have been doubled because Liberals could not have been found to make a fight against Union.

And the election results in this Province show that the Act was quite necessary. It was a blunder whatever way you look at it. In the general election of 1911 in the ten Saskatchewan constituencies the aggregate majorities for the successful candidates were 18,026. On Monday last, according to figures thus far received, the aggregate majorities of the successful candidates in the twelve constituencies in