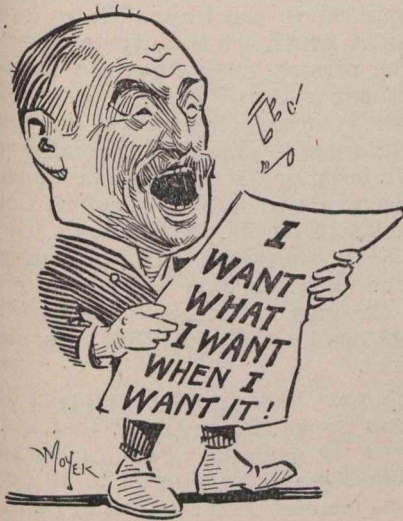


THE BORDEN CABINET.—VIII. THE MINISTER OF CUSTOMS.

By H. F. Gadsby.



Hon. J. D. Reid.

DR. John Dowsley Reid illustrates in a way one of the parables—that of the faithful steward. They gave him certain Eastern Ontario Constituencies to look after in the last general election and he brought them in. But like Little Bo Peep's sheep they carried, their tales behind them. We use the word tales advisedly because there is a sad story behind each. What that story is, it boots not to relate. Some say that it was "Doc" Reid's personal influence that did the business, others that it was the special arguments that he used, of which arguments the Conservatives had considerably more than plenty. Be that as it may the Doctor turned the trick, delivered the goods, and inasmuch as he was faithful in the small matter of these Constituencies they gave him a big job—to wit, Minister of Customs. Virtue is its own reward, but the portfolio of Customs is seven thousand dollars a year better than that, or Doctor Reid would not have taken it.

The appointment caused much surprise because nobody up to that time had suspected that the member for Grenville was a great statesman. It is only fair to add that nobody has suspected him since, but it may be like Br'er Fox, he's lyin' low. At all events he is Minister of Customs and they don't make a man Minister of Customs in Canada without substantial reasons. It was probably his force

of character that landed the job. The Doctor went after it with tremendous vigor. As soon as the returns were in, in fact before some of the outlying districts had been heard from, he took the first train to Ottawa and camped on Premier Borden's doorstep until the job was in his pocket. The door-step was a strategic spot because from that point he could see who went in and out and who were likely to be his rivals. Ever and anon he was admitted to Premier Borden's presence and there are still holes in the library rug where the Minister of Customs pounded his cane as he set forth his claims to the office.

It stands to the Doctor's credit that he knew what he wanted and that he didn't stop kicking till he got it. As Marcus Aurelius has aptly remarked, the kicker always gets his piece of it. The Doctor is a man who wants what he wants when he wants it and that is more than can be said of the other candidates for the job who never got closer to it than the Russell House rotunda. While their hopes were rising Doc. Reid was Johnny on the spot and was getting in some good licks. The Doctor is a standing example to persons desirous of Cabinet positions not to linger on the way. It is the old fable of the hare and the tortoise. The hare stops to whoop it up and the tortoise comes in under the wire a winner. An aspirant for the Inland Revenue Department might appropriately loiter but a Minister of Customs can't afford to wait.

The story goes that Andrew Broder, the Abraham Lincoln of the Conservative party, who contributed so much to the reciprocity campaign in the way of loyal sentiment and whimsical anecdote, was the man of Premier Borden's choice until Doc. Reid persuaded him that the department of Customs wasn't good enough for Andrew and that they'd better save him for something better. This something better that Andrew is being saved for is not the Inland Revenue Department, though one might think so from the spite the member for Dundas shows toward cigarettes, but a place on the Dominion Railway Commission. One of these places

will fall in presently and no one will begrudge Andy Broder his good luck. It goes to prove that story telling is a useful art and that a sense of humor doesn't always land its possessor in the discard. But first and last Andrew Broder will owe his good fortune to Doc. Reid who sooner than see him sacrificed on a bargain day job like the Minister of Customs, took it himself.

Still another reason why Doctor Reid adorns the position he does is that he was put there to be a sort of antidote to the seven C.N.R. Cabinet Ministers who are supposed to be the main ingredients of the Borden Government. Other railways must be represented in a railway administration, and Doctor Reid represents them, that is to say he represents one of them—or perhaps more. It is said, too, that when Andy Broder was talked of, it was pointed out by the distillers that Andy was as much opposed to whiskey as he was to cigarettes and that that influence would be gone unless it had a safe representative in the Cabinet. When Premier Borden had listened to all the other arguments, it was the Doctor's railway argument, properly fortified with high authority and other mutual credentials that turned the scale in his favor. The Doctor is so fond of his railway affiliations that he is said to be understudying the Minister of Railways and plans to take over that job when Frank Cochrane lets go. It is true that he is no talker but even at that he will be several degrees more vocal than the present incumbent. Besides what's the use of a Minister of Railways being a great talker anyhow? In these days when they can give away \$15,000,000 to the C. N. R. and guarantee another \$45,000,000 in two years the Minister of Railways has no need to talk. The money talks for him.

Doctor Reid has never regretted becoming a Cabinet Minister. Having put his hand to the plow he has not turned back. That is to say he sold his starch factory and is mighty glad to be rid of it. Although at various times the Borden Government has shown a lack of stiffness in its backbone they will have to look to somebody else than Doctor Reid for starch.