

CRITICISM BY FORMER FRIENDS OF THE NORRIS GOVERNMENT

John W. Wilton, in the debate on the speech from the throne, February 2nd, 1920, as reported in the Telegram February 3rd, 1920:

"Any government can pass legislation in order to cope with existing conditions and then let the legislation lie," said the speaker. "Apparently the Norris Government has no policy to cope with the present situation which exists in Canada."

"The policy of the Norris Government, as announced by Premier Norris on several occasions, was to do nothing, but sit and wait for the leaders of the revolution to call off the strike. How can a government be neutral when its authority is attacked and its very being is challenged?" he asked.

"The hand writing is already on the wall for the Norris administration," declared Mr. Wilton. "I can see it and it says: 'You have been tried and in the balance you have been found wanting. Thy kingdom hath departed from thee.'"

Speaking of the Industrial Conditions Bill Mr. Wilton declared that it had been mismanaged to the extent of uselessness.

"What was the policy decided upon and followed by this Government while the civil war was raging; while this alleged conspiracy to overthrow established authority, including this government itself, was being carried on? When the Government was being pressed to act, the Premier himself made the statement that his Government could do nothing until the sympathetic strike, the revolution was over. If the Premier was right, assuming the armies of the strike leaders were revolutionary, then the action of Lincoln in crushing the rebellion in 1865 was wrong. That government should have waited until the rebellion was over and the southern confederacy triumphant before acting. How can a government be neutral when its own authority is being challenged and its very existence is attacked."

"In my opinion this Government contributed to a great degree in rendering the sympathetic strike possible (1) by its action in the closing days of last session with regard to the Industrial Conditions Bill, when certain provisions necessary for the protection of the public were eliminated practically at the dictation of the Red leaders of labor; (2) by its failure to organize the Joint Council of Industry before the strike was declared and thus failed to have a complete public investigation before the outbreak of hostilities."

"Had the Government acted as it should have, the Red leaders would have found few followers," he said. "The general public suffered in the recent general strike and it was the duty of the Government to take care of the rights of the public."

Donald A. Ross, as reported in the Telegram, February 10th, 1920, in a debate on the speech from the throne:

"If this Government had been alive to the seriousness of the situation the outbreak here (referring to the strike in Winnipeg) would not have been so serious."

At a meeting of the Manitoba Liberal Association at the Liberal Club Bldg., Notre Dame Ave., April 8th, 1920, the following resolution was passed:

"That the Norris-Johnson Government has betrayed and forfeited its sacred trust of the leadership of the Manitoba Liberal party and merits the condemnation of the electorate of this Province.

"Because it has sacrificed and violated the true and great traditional principles of Liberalism and because it has been recklessly inefficient and extravagant in its administration.

"Be it resolved that the Manitoba Liberal Association should nominate candidates in opposition to the Norris Government."

At a meeting of the Dominion Labor party on April 10th, 1920, the following resolution was passed:

"Whereas the Norris Government have failed to carry out the progressive platform on which they were elected, and

"Whereas they have recklessly squandered the public money, and

"Whereas they have combined with the most reactionary forces of this country, and

"Whereas they have served as tools in the hands of those who resorted to the most autocratic and oppressive measures known in history; and

"Whereas they have permitted the infringement of provincial rights by handing over the administration of our courts to the Union Government; and

"Whereas they have by their actions proven to be real enemies of the people;

"Be it therefore resolved that this convention of workers most emphatically condemns said government and deems it to be the sacred duty of every liberty-loving man and woman to combine at the forthcoming election for the purpose of saving the Province from their hands."