

Hon. Mr. KING: A War-time Elections Act? No!

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: There still is enough water in the canal to receive me before such legislation would have my support.

When the then Government had thus broken the morale of its opponents and held them at its mercy, it obtained some accessions to its ranks. Sir Wilfrid Laurier said to me: "With such legislation on the Statute Book, we need not go to the people. The election is settled. Ballot box stuffing and ballot switching are sanctioned."

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Will my honourable friend allow me?

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Of course my right honourable friend benefited by that legislation, and he is surprised that I still feel the pinch.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: I have no apology whatever for the legislation, notwithstanding the misrepresentations of it by my honourable friend.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Well, I can say to my right honourable friend that if he thinks he was rejected three times by the province of Quebec because of conscription, he is wrong. He was rejected because of what was called that "infamous legislation," the War-time Elections Act and the Military Voters Act. If he had gone to the people with a referendum on conscription and the people had decided by a majority in favour of it, the province of Quebec would have obeyed the law. But he and his Government did not dare to rely upon a referendum, even in Ontario, because thousands and thousands of Ontario farmers did not want their sons to be conscripted.

My right honourable friend says, "You have extinguished the war spirit in the country by going to the people as one party, instead of doing as we did in 1917 and forming a Union Government." I have stated how the Conservative Government in 1917, after having broken the morale of its opponents and made it impossible for them to be returned unless they supported the Government, succeeded in attracting some members from the ranks of the Liberal party. But the so-called Union Government went to the people and split the country asunder. I said on the floor of the Senate in 1918 or 1919—my words may be found in Hansard—that on a proper franchise not one Tory would be returned from the province of Quebec. And in 1921 not a single member of my right honourable friend's party was returned in that province.

The same was true in Nova Scotia and in the Western Provinces. And my right honourable friend's once proud party presented scarcely a candidate in my province in the last election, most of the Government's opponents having been known as National Government candidates.

I desire now to revert to a remark made by my right honourable friend. He said that the British Government never approached the Dominion with a straight proposal which might be rejected by a stern negative. I know that in the past the reputation of the British Government for diplomacy was of the highest. I am not speaking of the last years. They have a splendid civil service, and its members know that a direct question may entail a direct negative, and therefore they begin by sounding a Dominion. If there is virtue in such a proceeding—and I think there is—I ask my right honourable friend whether there is not like virtue in the method of the Prime Minister of a Dominion who, when approached under such circumstances, has to see that some alternative proposition may be made before he says no. Perhaps my right honourable friend will find that when he was pressing for an answer to the question, "Have there been approaches or conversations by the British Government on this matter?" the Prime Minister considered it good policy for the Dominion of Canada to adopt the method of the British Government: instead of heralding to the people and to Parliament perhaps a difference of opinion which could be ironed out, he was asking my right honourable friend to please stay his hand, as matters being discussed needed to be treated with some delicacy in order that a solution might be reached. The right honourable gentleman had the answers that came through me from the Prime Minister. He should realize, since he recognizes that the British Government never approach a Dominion with a blunt question which might call for a negative, that in adopting a similar policy the Dominion could and should have some leeway to open a discussion with the Imperial authorities. As a matter of fact, such was the case, and a few days afterwards, in the British House of Commons, the Minister said, "We are highly pleased with the proposal of the Prime Minister of Canada."

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Does the leader of the Government say negotiations were going on during June?

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: No.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: They were over.