

News from Ottawa

Macdonald Election Charges, Reciprocity and Farmers' Loans Under Discussion

(By The Guide Special Correspondent.)

Ottawa, Nov. 29.—The debate on the address has been under way all the week in the House of Commons, and will not come to a conclusion before next Tuesday, at the earliest, when an amendment moved by Sir Wilfrid Laurier condemning the Government for methods pursued in connection with the Macdonald and Richelieu bye-elections will be voted on. The amendment to the address, which constitutes a want of confidence motion declares: "That in the election of Macdonald and Richelieu there were practices calculated to terrorize and corrupt the electorate, which were connived at by ministers and which deserve the censure of the House."

The effect of this motion which was moved on Monday last has been to make the happenings in connection with the two elections the leading feature of the debate. All the known facts and charges in connection with the Macdonald contest have been placed on the records, both by way of affidavits and in narrative form. In regard to Richelieu the charges are not so serious, being confined to the allegation that Sir Rodolphe Forget, at the instance of Hon. Robert Rogers, attempted to bribe the constituency by the promise of a marine railway and other public works. A curious development in connection with the Richelieu case is that Mr. Rogers, who made the chief defence for the government, denies that he authorized the Montreal financial knight to make such a promise, and it is reported that the two have had a quarrel over the matter.

The general consensus of opinion seems to be that the government has not yet been able to give an adequate explanation of the arrests of innocent men in Macdonald. Mr. Rogers, in the course of his speech, declared that he was willing to take the responsibility for everything that happened. In view of this declaration the opposition will be all the more anxious to prove its charges. The defence of the minister of public works in a word was that the

advocates of wider markets were sore over their defeat and that in every case where an arrest had been made it was justified by the circumstances.

Premier Borden did not attempt to deal with the charges in detail, but seemed content to point to the fact that in recent years the Liberals had been guilty of election crimes.

Redistribution

Although as stated above Sir Wilfrid Laurier's amendment want of confidence motion in regard to the bye-elections had the effect of confining the debate this week largely to that topic other matters were dealt with, more particularly the navy and reciprocity. The Opposition leader made a vigorous protest because the Speech from the Throne made no mention of a redistribution bill. He was replied to by Premier Borden. After that the subject was not often referred to, in all probability because the Opposition proposes to move another amendment dealing exclusively with the question or else bring it up in some other way.

Sir Wilfrid in demanding a Redistribution bill this session said that it would no doubt be argued that it is sufficient to have the bill brought down before a general election, but that such is not the interpretation that has been given to this provision of the B.N.A. Act in the past. "It may be," he said, "the will or the pleasure of the Governor-General to dissolve Parliament at any time. There may be a crisis which may make this course advisable. Therefore it is necessary that the conditions under which elections must take place should be the same at all times. This has been the policy which has been followed after every census. Why, then, this exception? What is the sinister design which exists in the mind of the ministry when they actually contemplate not having the redistribution this session? I shall await what the Government have to say on this important subject. I assume they have today no

intention of performing what is an important constitutional duty. If I am wrong I shall be glad to know it, and it will be my duty to apologize, but if I am right the Government may expect to hear of the question again during the present session."

Premier Borden in his reply did not commit himself definitely as to the intentions of the Government, but in his brief reference to the matter left the general impression that the leader of the Opposition was right in assuming that it is not proposed to introduce a Redistribution bill this session. Sir Wilfrid, he said, was very much concerned about an anticipated crisis in the government, but he would do well to provide for any crisis which might arise in the ranks of his own party.

Parenthetically, it might here be remarked that the Prime Minister overlooked the very obvious fact that a crisis in the opposition ranks could in no way result in depriving Western Canada of its proper representation, while a government crisis resulting in an appeal to the country would have just that effect.

As I understand it," proceeded the Premier, "any redistribution measure cannot take effect until after the dissolution of Parliament. That is absolutely understood. I have under my hand a pretty careful statement of what has been done in that regard since the inception of Confederation, but I will take only one illustration. In 1901 there was a preliminary report of the census made on August 15, and the Redistribution bill was not assented to until October 26, 1903, twenty-six months afterwards. The report which we issued to the public was under the date of February 27, 1912; and if we put through the Redistribution bill by April, 1914, we shall have made as much progress as was made after the census of 1901." That was all the Premier had to say in regard to the matter, but in view of the fact that he had prepared himself with this defence it is a safe assumption that the government, for the moment at least, does not expect to introduce a Redistribution bill.

Reciprocity a Live Issue

It is understood that at the first Opposition caucus held this week the matter of the Liberal party's future attitude on the question of reciprocity was discussed and a practically unanimous

determination was reached to continue to advocate a policy of wider markets. This determination was given voice to in a number of speeches delivered this week, all in reply to a challenge made by Hon. W. T. White to declare their policy as to reciprocity and to tell what Canada had lost because of its defeat. Here are some of the answers given to Mr. White's question by Opposition members:—

Mr. Robert Cruise, Dauphin:—"I am more strongly in favor of reciprocity than I was two years ago. It is all very well for the representatives of the manufacturers to get up and ask for protection. They are the men who want protection. The farming industry is the most important industry that we have in this country. They are the men who should get legislation at first hand. They are the men who should have the markets of the world thrown open to them to allow them to get full value for their products."

F. B. Carvell, Carleton, N.B.:—"If Mr. White will have patience he will have the views of one member about reciprocity. I think he interjected this subject into the debate for another reason. I think in the halo of glory in which he lives, in holy Toronto, and surrounded as he is by his manufacturing magnates, his banking magnates, his commercial magnates, and his transportation magnates, he rather wants us to resurrect reciprocity, having the idea that it will be to his benefit. Now, let me tell him, that so far as this humble member of the opposition is concerned, I intend to resurrect reciprocity, and to talk reciprocity every time I get a chance, in the House and out of it, just as long as there is any possibility of obtaining it. Let me tell him that from my standpoint and the standpoint of millions of people in Canada reciprocity was good economically. In January, 1911, it was good economically, and in September, 1911; it is good economically today, and will be good economically always. I want to tell him that he is living, I believe, in a fool's paradise."

Subsequent to the writing of the above paragraph, or to be precise, at a late hour this (Friday) evening Geo. Fowler, Kings, N.B., challenged Hon. Wm. Pugsley, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Hugh Guthrie, in turn to say whether or not they still favored reciprocity. Their replies were:—

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ANOTHER RAID ON THE TREASURY