

Canada's Khaki Parliament

By THE EDITOR

MEMORABLE parliaments there have been from time to time in this self-governing portion of the British Empire; none so memorable and eloquent in the making of history as that which assembled on Tuesday, August 18th, 1914.

When the Parliament of the province of Canada met to discuss the Confederation resolutions the members must have felt that they were approaching a grave national crisis. The speeches made during the debate exhibit a feeling that danger was in the air and that the future of the scattered British North American colonies depended upon unity of spirit and unity of military defence. There was a possibility at that time that the Trent affair might lead to war between the United States and Great Britain.

After the Queen's proclamation of Confederation, on July 1st, 1867, the first parliament of the Dominion of Canada met at Ottawa in much the same spirit. On that occasion there was a deep sense of new responsibility assumed and of new problems to be solved. But over no parliament since that date has a war cloud hung. The Parliament of 1901 had to deal with questions and measures raised by the sending of Canadian troops to the South African war in the closing months of the previous year. Yet no one felt that Canada was at war.

The special session of the Canadian Parliament last week was Canada's first war Parliament since Sir Isaac Brock called together the members of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada in the early days of 1812. As the hour of three o'clock of last Tuesday (18th) approached, a strong cordon of Dominion police was thrown around the half-century-old building which crowns Parliament Hill. Only members of the House and the Senate, newspaper men and visitors with special cards were allowed to approach within fifty yards of the building. The editor of the Canadian Courier, in the company of an Ottawa newspaper proprietor, sauntered up the main avenue to the top of the steps leading to the upper terrace; but there they stayed. The sergeant of police was polite, but firm. If the gentlemen had their press certificates with them they could pass, otherwise they must remain with the crowd of common people. Fortunately, a well-known Hansard reporter came along opportunely and relieved the situation. At the main entrance three more Dominion police barred the way.

A few minutes later a clatter of hoofs was heard and His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, Governor-General of Canada, arrived to open the first war Parliament of one hundred years. He passed through the main entrance into the Senate Chamber. Very shortly the Usher of the Black Rod tapped on the door of the Commons Chamber and informed the waiting commoners that the Governor-General desired their presence in the Red Chamber. The members rose and followed the Sergeant-at-Arms through the corridors to the other building.

There were just enough differences between this scene and its predecessors to make it remarkable and worthy of remembrance. The somewhat gorgeous throne was occupied by a gentleman in khaki. There was no gorgeous robe, and no silken breeches. The Governor's uniform was that of a British officer ready to march to the field of action. The Aides who stood about were in similar uniform. Only the

Duchess, Princess Patricia and their ladies-in-waiting represented the customary throng of fair ladies.

Then came the reading of the speech from the throne, a speech solemn and full of portent.

The Commons returned to their chamber. After some routine business the House adjourned.

NEXT day business was resumed in earnest. The address in reply to the speech from the throne was moved and seconded in two carefully-prepared addresses by two private members. Then followed the most important utterances ever delivered in the House. The one by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, leader of the Opposition, and the other by Sir Robert Borden, the Premier. It was to hear these two speeches that two hundred and twenty-one members of the House of Commons had come from the constituencies which stretch from Sydney on the east to Victoria on the west. It was these two speeches which a whole nation awaited. In them was to be summed up the attitude of an united people anxious for the integrity, the glory, and the happiness of the far-flung Empire of which Canada is a part. It was not so much Canada's answer to the Emperor of Germany as Canada's answer to the blood-call of the monarch and parliament of the British Empire.

According to established usage, the leader of the Opposition spoke first. The general cheers which greeted his rising indicated that both sides knew what his attitude would be. "It is our duty," he said, "more pressing upon us than any other duty, to let Great Britain know, to let the friends and the foes of Great Britain know, that there is in Canada but one mind and one heart." That was his message, the same message as was brought to the British House of Commons when Bonar Law and John Redmond heard that Great Britain had sent an ultimatum to Germany a fortnight previously. That was the message Sir Wilfrid Laurier gave the people of Canada—Sir Wilfrid, who has been dubbed an "anti-imperialist," who has been many times termed "traitor," who has many times been called "disloyal." It revealed the hollowness of much that men are wont to defend under the name of "politics," the meanness of much that is preached in the name of "patriotism."

He declared that all Canadians are "conscious and proud" that the mother country did not engage in this war because of any selfish motive or any purpose of aggrandizement, but to maintain untarnished the honour of her name, the fulfillment of her treaties, the obligations to her allies, and "to save civilization from the unbridled lust of conquest and power." He declared his belief that the Allies were fighting for freedom against oppression, for democracy against autocracy, for civilization against barbarism.

Then came Sir Robert Borden, who, as Premier, has borne the brunt of the strange turn of events. As a junior British statesman he reviewed the events which led up to the war and the actions which followed. He explained clearly why Canada stood unitedly behind Great Britain in this fight for liberty, what Canada had done and what was proposed. The naval service act of 1910, once severely

criticized, had been used as a basis of action. The Niobe and the Rainbow, once dubbed "a tinpot navy," had been fitted out for the defence of Canada's coasts. A Canadian contingent had been organized, a million bags of flour given freely to the British Government, a free hospital offered to France, and a general preparedness for all emergencies had been undertaken. "Not for love of battle, not for lust of conquest, not for greed of possessions, but for the cause of honour, to maintain solemn pledges, to uphold principles of liberty, and to withstand forces that would convert the world into an armed camp."

It was a magnificent spectacle. The well-filled House thrilled with the emotions invoked by the two great leaders. The echo of it reverberated through the Dominion and round the never-ending Empire which owes allegiance to Britain's flag.

AND having thus put Canada squarely and honourably before herself and the world, Parliament got down on Thursday to the real business of the special war session. Fifty millions of dollars were voted, with more to come if necessary. War taxes were fixed with which to provide the extra revenue. This sounds easy enough, but behind the Finance Minister's plans was much anxious thinking on his part and by others.

The situation is complicated. While Canada has a surplus of revenue over expenditure, the Government is continually borrowing money for capital expenditures. These borrowings increase our national debt. In the past ten years, they have not been large but they are always there. About forty millions was appropriated at the last parliament for capital expenditures. Add to this fifty millions of war expenditures, and there is ninety million to be faced. Assuming that the ordinary revenue equals the ordinary expenditure, there is still this ninety millions to be provided.

To raise ninety millions when the big lenders of the world, in London and Paris, have closed their offices, is not an easy task. Fortunately, the Finance Minister got twenty-five millions in June, so that his task is reduced that much. But where can he raise the balance—sixty-five million? This was the question which the Finance Minister had to answer.

He proposes to raise fifteen millions by an increase in Dominion notes. This will be done by putting five million dollars in gold in the Treasury and issuing twenty millions of notes. By this device, he loses five millions and gains twenty. It is usual to issue only dollars, one dollar in bills for one dollar in gold, but a special act enables him to issue one dollar in bills for twenty-five cents in gold.

This conservative scheme still leaves the Finance Minister with a deficit of fifty millions. His next proposition, therefore, is to increase the customs duties on cocoa or chocolate; chicory or coffee; condensed milk and milk foods; sweet biscuits; preserved fruits, canned fruits, jellies and jams; raw sugar, refined sugar and confectionery; cigars, cigarettes and tobaccos; ale, beer, porter and stout; alcohol, alcoholic perfumes, spirits of nitre and medicated wines. There will be a corresponding increase in the excise taxes on spirits and tobacco made in this country.

On Saturday Parliament adjourned, having done a record piece of work in five days.

WHEN THE FAMOUS "Q.O.R." MARCHED AWAY



The Queen's Own, of Toronto, as they marched down University Ave. past the South African monument.



The people crowded the old Union Station to cheer them away—there was neither wailing nor weeping, but—