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THE ONTARIO ELECTIONS

THE result of the Ontario Provincial elections gives Liberalism throughout Canada reason for pride and encouragement. True, the Whitney Government was returned by a large majority and Conservatism will rule the province for perhaps another four years. But the Government majority was reduced from 68 to 57 and the numerical strength of the Opposition was increased from 17 to 27. These figures may be changed later by re-counts in a half dozen constituencies, where at the time of writing re-counts have been ordered. The result will likely be a further increase in the representation of Liberalism in the Legislature.

The main result, however, is not to be gauged merely by the change in the numerical strength of the two parties. The winning of elections is not the chief business of Liberalism. It believes first in having the best cause and in arousing a public opinion that will compel from stand-pat Conservatism reforms in the interest of the masses of the people. Though the forces of Liberalism did not win in Ontario on June 29th, they conducted a fight which has developed a public sentiment that must tell with an accumulative effect on the next campaign, a fight which has enhanced among all thinking and honest electors the prestige of Mr. Rowell and which has strengthened public confidence in the sincerity of purpose, honesty of conviction and genuine desire for public service for which he and the men behind him stand. That is an asset which must in the end weigh much more with the electors than any temporary defeat at the polls and which in the long run is sure to beat out mere political opportunism in winning lasting public support.

A Good Cause and a Good Fight.

Liberalism in Ontario had a good cause and put up a good fight. Liberals have nothing to be ashamed of either in the character of the campaign, in the nature of the appeal to the electors or in the result of that appeal.

On the other hand beyond the fact of mere party victory there was nothing either in the campaign or in the methods used by the Conservative forces to win, which should inspire any very sincere exultation in the Government ranks. The election was brought on suddenly to suit the political convenience and the political exigencies of the Government, without any real excuse for seeking a new appeal to the electors after only two and one-half years since the preceding election. The real reason for bringing on the election was the precarious health of the Premier, Sir James Whitney; the cabinet dissensions and jealousies, and the desire to secure a new lease of power before the threatened disintegration of the Cabinet became too open or too serious. The Government knew it had behind it a well-organized and well-financed political machine, backed up by the influence and funds of the Federal Government. It saw that the trend of public opinion was moving steadily away from Conservative standpatism and from reactionary Toryism, both at Ottawa and at Toronto. The personal prestige of Sir James Whitney and the public sympathy engendered by his recent serious illness were used to the full extent. The Federal ministers from Ontario were brought into the campaign and the influence of patronage and money in unlimited extent was fully exploited. But even more potent than these was the alliance with the liquor interests, well organized and fighting for their lives to preserve a profitable and evil traffic.

Self-Interest versus Humanitarianism.

With the short time allowed to get candidates in the field or to perfect organization and with the combination of all the above influences and forces against him, Mr. Rowell was at an overwhelming disadvantage from the start of the campaign. In so far as concerned the mere getting of votes influenced by considerations of self-interest, the Government forces had the field to themselves. In the new Legislature it will not be forgotten by the people of the province that Sir James Whitney and his Government owe their lease of power to the organized support of the liquor interests, that behind Mr. Rowell stand all the influences making for social and moral reform and that the progressive programme for which he and his followers stand in matters of education, agriculture, justice, finance and labor, has been advocated with sincerity, with courage, with outstanding ability. With Mr. Rowell the main thing has been public service, and practical humanitarianism. With the Government the main thing has been an ignoble squabble for office and the winning of the election by means fair or foul.

The fruits of the campaign waged by Liberalism will be harvested at the next election.