

EDITORIAL

IT was regarded as the triumph of Sir Robert Borden's singleness of purpose to have united leading men of the Conservative and Liberal parties and the leaders of labor and agriculture, in a government for the defence of the Empire. Alone Sir Robert had struggled to accomplish this end, meeting day after day, through his weeks of negotiations, with discouragements from within his party and rebuffs from without. Nothing but genuine sincerity could have won Carvell and Calder. They were astute politicians, steeped in party prejudice, trained in party warfare, and knowing party wiles; nothing but conviction of the need for union and the honesty of its inspiration could have taken them from their allegiance to Liberalism.

SIR ROBERT returned from England last summer with an inside knowledge of Imperial conditions. He knew that things were not going well with the Allies, and were liable to go worse. Events in Russia and Italy have shown the soundness of his conviction. Sir Robert regarded it as inevitable that more Canadians would have to go overseas; and the voluntary system having broken down, only one means of securing men was left—conscription. Sir Robert undoubtedly regretted the necessity, but of what use were regrets when action was imperative? Canada is at war, and conscription, regrettable as it is, is merely a means to an end, the only fair way, the really efficient way, of distributing the burdens of service.

IF Sir Robert had offered Sir Wilfrid a share in the government and the responsibility before making public his determination to enforce conscription, Sir Wilfrid might have accepted; so it is argued. But this phase of the situation is only interesting; it is not essential. Sir Robert may have made a mistake. He is accused of having made many mistakes, as were Asquith and Kitchener, and as are Lloyd-George and Wilson. The events of this mighty war move with such suddenness, and are so abnormal, so beyond the ken of mankind, that mistakes are inevitable. If Germany's war trained leaders make mistakes—and at times their plans have lamentably failed—what is to be expected of the civilians charged with the responsibility of decisions under democracy?

COUNTING the hands that might have been played is sheer idleness; we must face things that are to-day. Certain men of outstanding prominence and integrity in the Liberal party accepted places in the government under the leadership of Sir Robert, and with Sir Robert have appealed to the country for support. Their announcement of Union brought a sigh of relief. The name—Union—was as a balm to the afflicted. Party politics were to be jettisoned; statesmanship was to take their place. There was every evidence that men would forget they were ever Liberals and Conservatives; would unite for the country's good. Their decision was fateful, for it takes more than a union of leaders to make a government. Sir Robert issued a manifesto containing the planks of the Unionist platform, and the manifesto met with widespread approval. Machine-made Conservatives and machine-made Liberals prepared to accept the inevitable.

BUT the prospects of the first days have not been fulfilled. The enthusiasm was not permanent. Party spirit, bred in the bone, comes creeping back. An election which once promised to be a series of acclamations, threatens to become a series of hotly and closely fought contests. And one need not dig deeply for an explanation. The bitter attacks which the Conservative press are making upon Sir Wilfrid Laurier are driving thousands of Liberals into opposition to Union. For, while many Liberals believe Sir Wilfrid has not suggested the best method for winning the war, few, if any, of them believe him to be guilty of not wanting to win the war. It is a mistake in judgment and not of heart, they reason. To denounce the man upon whom they have relied since childhood for leadership in public matters, as a traitor, to caricature him as in league with the Kaiser, is an insult to their judgment.

WE must remember that charging Sir Wilfrid with treason is no new thing. When in 1911 he advocated Reciprocity with the United States, he was represented as a traitor to the Empire. The charges of to-day are no stronger, no more virulent, the cartoons no viler, than they were then. And yet to-day we have a fair measure of

reciprocity with the United States; we have borrowed money from the United States by the scores of millions and, we are relying upon the United States to finance the grain-crops of Western Canada. We have gone further towards Continentalism than Sir Wilfrid advocated, and no one has suggested that treason has been committed. Thus it is only natural that men should look upon the present charge of treason as the time-dishonored cry of "wolf" and consider the present charges as untrue, unjust, and reprehensible. There are few Liberals who do not believe that the accusations of treason to the Empire in 1911 were inspired by misguided party enthusiasm. Can they be blamed for regarding accusations of treason in 1917 in the same light? To attack Sir Wilfrid as a traitor, is to raise a battle-cry for war-horses retired from duty through lack of employment.

IT must not be forgotten that six months ago Sir Wilfrid had the biggest personal following of any man in Canada. Leave Quebec out of the situation; Sir Wilfrid was the biggest Liberal in Ontario, the biggest Liberal in Manitoba, the biggest Liberal in each of the Western Provinces, in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. In Nova Scotia alone was his prestige disputed and that by Premier Murray. To hold Sir Wilfrid up to the Liberals of Canada as in league with the Kaiser, is to weaken confidence in the statesman-like qualities of Unionism. Sir Robert has not done so, and his example ought to be good enough for his followers.

AND it is so unnecessary. The Military Service Act, like the Victory Loan, is a necessity; and, like the Victory Loan, will stand upon its merits. The electors may be appealed to with confidence, so long as the appeals are rational and void of political rancour. Alien enemies have been disfranchised—the rest of the country is overwhelmingly loyal. We may differ as to the means; we are united as to the desirability, the necessity of winning the war. In Union there is strength against Germany. For this, the Union Government was designed, and under this idea men enlisted in its service. To represent—as a section of the press are doing—Union as designed for the political destruction of French-Canada, is to widen division and weaken unity. The French-speaking Canadians have not enlisted as well as might have been expected, nor have the English-speaking Canadians. As a class, the British-born has alone done its duty. The records of the exemption tribunals tell the story. We must fearlessly and honestly give credit and place blame where they belong, otherwise, politics may destroy what Sir Robert Borden's statesmanship promises to accomplish.

WHEN the Bible writer talked about beating swords into plough-shares he was enunciating a truth for the twentieth century. But it so comes about that at the time when more swords in the shape of vast armies and big guns are engaged in war, more plough-shares are needed, now, to-day, when to-morrow may be too late. Townspeople have been led to think that the harvest is the nation's greatest immediate-concentration job. This is a fallacy. The nation that has not ploughed in season will not be troubled with its harvest. And it is the plough, not the self-binder, that becomes the ultimate weapon of national efficiency in production. Because Canada's national plough in 1916 did not do its work, Canada's self-binder in 1917 had less than its share of work to do. Because the ploughs of 1917 are too few the self-binder of 1918 may be underworked. The furrow is the nation's last trench.

The time to plough is not in the spring, but in the fall. The greatest harrow disc in the world is frost. Land that is ploughed in November to be frost-harrowed all winter and come out for the farmer's harrow in the spring is the land that has an even chance of keeping self-binders busy in August. Many farmers in the West have put in wheat on unploughed stubble. Result—poor crops or none. Short season, quick-action ploughing is the only hope of a harvest. Any machinery or organization that gets the nation's ploughing done in the fall is adding untold millions to the nation's harvest in the following year. The nation that has not ploughed need not expect to reap.

MAY we not as well admit, that in most of the business of modern warfare we have been compelled to do second what Germany did first? Agreeably or otherwise, the pace has been set by the organization geared up to set it. Have we not time and again discovered that you can't kill a tiger with cross words and dog whips? Are not most of the crushing superiorities we now have on the west front things we have learned from Germany to do a little better than Germany? And if we have succeeded in one thing more than another, is it not in the stupendous achievement of co-ordinating a large number of governments and nations into a vast working organization against Germany? Having done so much, are we to fail at the last because we refuse to co-ordinate our organization at the front? If we establish unity behind the lines, why not co-ordinated action under a supreme head along the front line? And though we may all prefer as much "particularism" as possible at home, is it not evident that the less we have of it on the battle front the sooner we shall be able to lick the Kaiser?