

## ELECTORAL CORRUPTION—A REMEDY.

ALL Canadians regardless of their party affiliations must welcome the action of Mr. A. K. Maclean, the Liberal member for Halifax, in bringing before the Commons a resolution calling for the legislative enactment of more effective means of preventing electoral corruption. Corrupt practices in elections and laxity in their exposure and in the punishment of those responsible for them are at the root of the political ills of Canadian democracy and are the basic causes of dishonest or inefficient government. It is undeniable, too, that there is need in Canada today for some such action as Liberalism in Parliament now proposes. The need was never so evident as it has been since the Borden Government took office.

### Premier Borden's Professions.

It will be remembered that in the platform which Mr. Borden put before the people when leader of the Opposition he pledged:—

"More effective provisions to punish bribery and fraud at elections, to ensure thorough publicity as to expenditures by political organizations, to prevent the accumulation of campaign funds for corrupt purposes and to prohibit contributions thereto by corporations, contractors and promoters, to expedite the hearing of election petitions, to provide for a thorough investigation of corrupt practices, and, if necessary, to appoint an independent prosecuting officer charged with that duty, to simplify the procedure thereof, and to enforce the laws so amended."

Mr. Borden has now been in power for more than two years. As head of the Government he has met Parliament at three sessions. He has had the opportunity and the power to enact provisions which he had declared necessary and which he pledged himself to the people to bring into effect. He has done nothing to implement his pledge.

Indeed, he has done worse than nothing. As leader of the Government he has countenanced by silence and inaction electoral methods of the worst kind practiced on behalf of candidates supporting his administration. He has made Hon. Robert Rogers the real boss and the leading influence of the administration, knowing at the same time that Mr. Rogers was directly or indirectly responsible for much of the electoral corruption so far exposed.

### The Trail of the Machine.

The by-election record since the present Government took office speaks for itself.

In **South Renfrew** bribery on a wholesale scale was attempted on behalf of the Government candidate. In one respect the attempt at bribery was open and brazen. Prominent Conservative-Nationalist speakers promised from the public platform that if the Ministerial candidate were elected large sums of money would be spent on the highways by the Ottawa Government.

In **Richelieu**, a Conservative Member of parliament told the electors he had the promise of the Minister of Public Works that a railway would be built in the constituency if the vote went right.

In **Hochelaga**, where Hon. Mr. Coderre, of Mr. Borden's Cabinet, was the Government candidate, an organized system of personation and "telegraphing" at the polls was in operation. Proof of this fact was supplied in affidavits made public after the election. When the matter was brought before the Commons and a motion put before the House by a Liberal member calling for an investigation, Mr. Borden joined with his followers in voting against any inquiry being made.

In **Macdonald**, the campaign on behalf of the Government candidate, Mr. Alexander Morrison, was under the personal direction of Hon. Mr. Rogers. Mr. Morrison was elected. The election was promptly protested by the Liberals. They charged that it had been brought about by bribery and corruption, intimidation, and by the prostitution of justice through the arrest of innocent Liberal workers on trumped-up charges and upon bogus warrants. When the protest was lodged every effort was made by the Government organization to prevent the case from coming to trial. Eventually the case was forced to trial. Rather than have the evidence which the Liberals had gathered made public, Mr. Morrison, through his counsel, admitted that his agents in the campaign had been guilty of corrupt practices and he was unseated.

In **Chateauguay**, bribery and corruption were perhaps even more glaringly apparent than in Macdonald, though the intimidation and the prostitution of justice of Macdonald may have been absent. Under the direction of the Department of Public Works, of which Mr. Rogers is the head, two hundred or so men were hurried into the riding to construct a dam across the Chateauguay river. The Government candidate was elected. The election was protested. As in Macdonald, the Government is making every effort to delay the hearing of the case. Already there has been sufficient delay to enable the Government candidate to take a seat in Parliament.

Cases such as these show how Mr. Borden's course in office runs contrary to his professions and pledges when in Opposition.

### The Liberal Resolution.

Mr. Maclean's resolution is timely and fitting. It is designed to put an end to conditions which are dangerous to Canada's future, conditions which have grown rapidly worse since Mr. Borden and his colleagues took office. It deserves the support of every man in Parliament. In its first paragraph the resolution follows the very wording of Mr. Borden's pre-election promise and sets forth that such action as the promise indicated should be taken. In the second, and remaining paragraph, it calls for a select committee of the House to examine the election laws, call witnesses, and report to the Commons as to what changes should be made in the existing election acts.

The Liberals propose that there shall not be a repetition of the recent carnivals of electoral debauchery if any action on their part can prevent it. Theirs is the credit of endeavoring to initiate necessary action which Mr. Borden promised but has failed to take. If more effective legislation to prevent corruption is not forthcoming, the blame will rest upon the Premier and his associates.