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Charlottetown Grandeur

appointed a Speaker from our ranks to the chair. We had still that majority of one after four years, but in days as strenuous as these it is not an easy matter to carry on government without having back of one a strong majority to give the support needed to put through its different policies.

"There are large questions of taxation, of immigration, fiscal problems, matters referring to reform of the Senate, and the like, which are of great concern and which we feel can best be dealt with by a new Parliament fresh with a mandate from the people. Feeling as we do the importance of an early solution of these questions, we are today asking the people of Canada to judge of our record under the handicap which we have worked, and say: Is not this Administration entitled at least to another opportunity to show what it can do with a good working majority in the House?"

Ever since the Liberal Government met, Mr. King continued, increased confidence had been shown in the House and throughout the country. Generally speaking, majorities in Parliament tend to get less and less, yet with the past

Government, as measure after measure was brought forward, majority after majority was recorded; majorities not only of one or two, but of 30, 50, 110 and 150 at different times. This increased confidence, Mr. King contended, was shown by the results of the last two bye-elections, one in Montreal and one in the Province of Ontario.

The past four years had been, as difficult as any Government could be faced with, owing to the unsettled conditions following the war. In that time five different administrations had followed each other in England. Not only had the Liberal Government no visible majority, but the Opposition was of a peculiar kind. The Conservatives on the one side found fault because the Government did not go farther in a certain direction; the Progressives on the other side found fault because it did not go in an opposite direction. "No matter what we did we have been fired at from both sides at once. We got our majorities by trying to make our measures so reasonable that they appealed to the reasonable men of all parties. We endeavored to legislate for the great majority of the people as a whole, not for an extreme class."

A still further difficulty was with the "strong Tory Senate," where, the speaker declared, active opposition and hostility was encountered. Measure after measure was thrown out, to be re-introduced and again thrown out. When one House of Parliament becomes an active bloc to legislation, the time has come when that House should be reformed. This was one of the reasons for the present appeal to the electors.

Reform in the Senate is not an easy matter. It can only be brought about by members of the Senate themselves being parties to the reform. The only way is to appoint in the Senate men who are pledged to support the Government in the measure of the reform of the constitution of the Senate

which the Government proposes. "We have not sought to interfere with respect to general legislation that might come from the House of Commons to the Senate, but there are certain changes which should be made in the powers of the Senate itself to bring that body more in accord with the spirit of the times. These changes the Government will propose in a bill which will be a Government measure. We will expect every Senator who goes in from this time on, to-

gether with those who have been appointed since we have taken office, to stand with us in bringing about that reform which is so essential in the interests of the people in this country. Providence is working with us; one by one the old-time Tories are being taken to a happier home. I don't think it will be very long before we will have a majority in the Senate as well as in the Commons; and when that majority comes we will be able to effect the reform that we desire."

Another difficulty was in regard to finances. The Government came into power inheriting a debt of \$2,400,000,000, \$1,670,000,000 of that was added during the war period on account of war expenditure and demobilization alone. Not a dollar of that amount has yet been paid. The Governments in office from the time the war started until two years after carried on the whole work of the war and demobilization with borrowed money which they left to subsequent Governments to pay. "That is where our problem comes in. Before we can deal with any other question we have got to meet that debt."

W. L. Mackenzie King Papers

Speeches-1922 - 1932

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