

WHAT THE COUNTRY EXPECTS

LAST August I outlined in The Courier what I believed was the real sentiment of the

West toward what everybody knew must be the main issues of a general election which had become inevitable—compulsory military service and increased, sustained war effort. I said without qualification that the West would be a unit for that government, under whatever name—Grit, Tory or Union, with a preference for the latter—which stood boldly and clearly for these things; and that candidates who did not stand for them with equal boldness and clarity would be put to the political sword. The results of the polling on December 17th have proved these statements correct.

These presents are not to boost myself as a prophet, political or otherwise. In the above forecast I was right. But in another respect I was wrong. For I said that an election—and especially a party election—was unnecessary, foolish, a waste of time, energy and money, since it would leave things much as they were. This was when there seemed little or no prospect of Union. But Union or not, I believe I was wrong in that opinion. In view of the things that emerged in the recent contest, the clear-cut division—racial, lingual and geographical—shown during the campaign and emphasized by the electoral results, I believe it was essential that Canada, as a whole, should express an opinion on current issues. It was essential that the majority should know their majority and the minority be convinced of their minority.

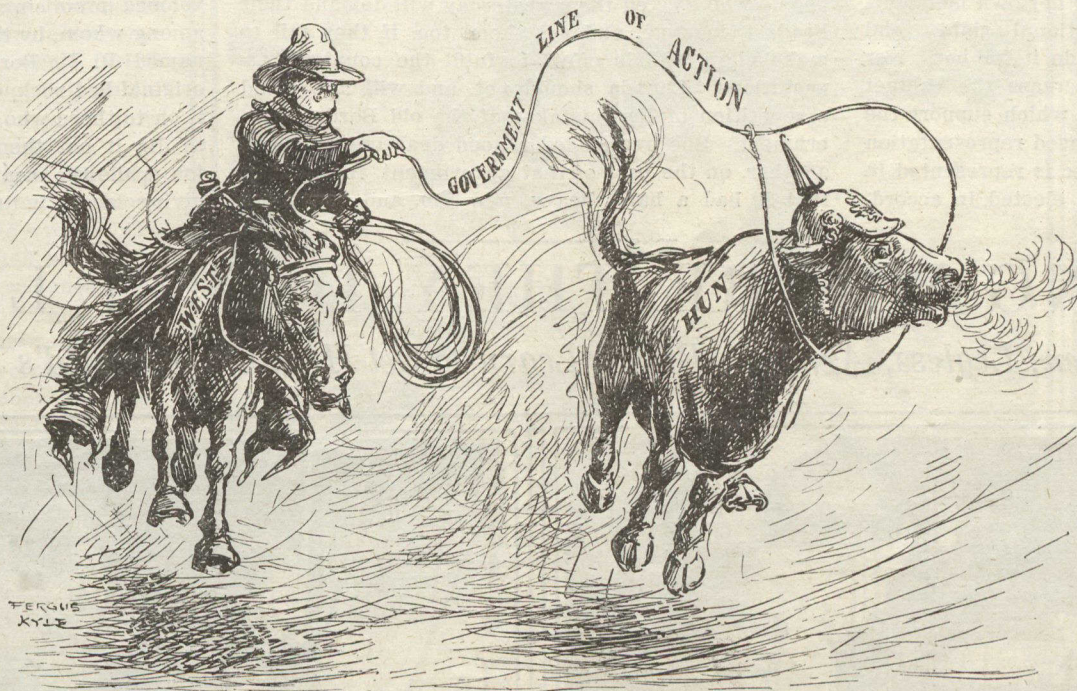
Now that the electoral tumult and shoutings have died and the captains and kings departed to public or private life, according to their luck or lack of it, we can look back with clearer vision, see what actually took place, and possibly learn a useful lesson or two therefrom.

THERE was a time when it seemed that the real issues might be fogged with lesser ones. But the exact contrary happened. The vital things stood out clear, tremendous, dwarfing all others, directly present in the minds and warmly close to the hearts of the people of the West. And there was where certain politicians miscalculated. For this was no common election fought between historic—or possibly prehistoric—parties; wherein the issue so far as there was one, was some obscure tariff point, extravagance, or broken promises which nobody really understood, or, understanding, cared a hoot about. Here, for the first time in the history of the Dominion, real, vital questions, elemental in their simplicity, and involving Canada's life-blood and Canada's treasure, and above all, Canada's honor, were placed before the people for a decision. There was no obscuring such things. The marvel is that some politicians thought they might be successfully obscured.

Signs and portents there were in the Western electoral sky long before December 17th plain for any man to read. And yet they were misread utterly by supposedly practical politicians. Why? Well, perhaps because they were too practical to believe in signs and portents which they had no hand in making. They thought they made politics themselves. So they did—but of another brand. They were high priests of party, and they could not conceive of any widespread heresy therein. To put a stopper on what there was, they came down to that Winnipeg convention which is now ancient history, bringing with them candle, bell and book. There they made incantation, and swung their censers—or possibly censers—and burnt party incense and put through their

WHAT Canada will insist on is business-like action and teamwork rather than grand-stand play. The new Government was elected for the specific purpose of handling affairs properly in war-time, and it must make good or make room.

By A. M. CHISHOLM



"The West will not only stand for, but stand and cheer for, anything that will throw a deep and lasting crimp into the Hun."

resolutions and departed in the comfortable belief that they had exorcised the evil spirit of country-first which had entered into some. They did not even trouble to take down the frame of the frame-up. They thought they had thrown and hog-tied the entire Western Liberal party. When, in spite of resolutions, their political yokefellows of other years refused to obey the goad and chose to follow their own convictions, they were at first incredulous, then amazed, and finally horrified. They went into the fight with their old commander-in-chief; but minus their generals of division, officered by third-rate men, with mutiny in the rank and file and with their organization shot to pieces.

NOW that the election has been won by the Unionist party, a good many people say that the principle of unionism has won a great victory. This means nothing whatever. The principle of unionism is so old and well established and obvious that it needs no demonstration, and never did since men first combined in tribe and clan.

What these people really mean is that we have reached the end of political parties in Canada. The fact is that we have formed a new party, or possibly two.

Old parties outlive their usefulness and party names their meaning, because the things that call them into being are dead horse and no longer issues. For a long time there has been little or nothing in our party names. In some respects the Conservatives are more liberal than the Liberals, and the Liberals more conservative than the Conservatives. But in the beginning any party is a union of those who hold similar opinions, to give expression and practical effect to such opinions. Union arises from practical necessity, and not from belief in or thought of any abstract principle. So in the present case.

We cannot get along without political parties until we all think alike on every public question; which we are very far from doing. When we reach that point we shall have one religion, and one church as well; which also seems well in the future. As long as there are political questions to be solved there will be parties, old and new. And so the Unionists will be a party, at least while the necessity for union lasts, possibly better than the old ones, but a political party, nevertheless, just as much as the old ones, with adherents and opponents, and consequently with an organization, because it is an enforced condition. It should be looked on as a political party, created for a specific purpose which could be accomplished in no other way than by the formation of a strong political party, which it is; and not as a composite advance agent of the millennium. It is bound to make mistakes; but it should be able to avoid repeating the mistakes of others.

Let us admit that the Unionist Government is the government of a new party. The party consists of all English-speaking Conservatives, and so far as election results furnish an indication, at least fifty per cent. of English-speaking Liberals and non-party men in the West, and in Ontario. Note that the non-party men, as between the old parties, are now supporters of the new party. Among the members-elect there is not one French-speaking supporter of the government; nor is there a supporter of the government, so far as I am aware, from any constituency where French-speaking citizens are in the majority. Therefore, it is plain that there was a clear-cut division at the polls between English-speaking and French-speaking citizens. It is not my