

CANADA'S IMMEDIATE DUTY.

THE case of the Canadian people against the profiteering politicians and party middlemen whose activities in war contracting are bringing disgrace on the Dominion has been put with unequalled force by Mr. N. W. Rowell, Leader of the Liberal Opposition in Ontario. Speaking at Woodstock, Ont., on December 4th, on the occasion of the annual meeting of the North Oxford Reform Association, Mr. Rowell made a vigorous plea for a proper expression of enlightened public opinion which would force such house-cleaning reforms as are demanded by present conditions. His suggestions may be briefly reviewed:

Grafters should be jailed.

Parliamentarians who profit from public contracts should be unseated.

Contractors allowed to make undue profits, mainly because of their political affiliations and service to the party should be eliminated.

A great British credit for the financing of Imperial war contracts should be established.

The Government should commandeer the best brains of both political parties and of all the business and commercial interests of Canada so that Canada's work for the War may be the best that is in her and that the British taxpayer may thus be given the square deal in Canada where he has the best right to expect it.

Thus Canada can demonstrate to the Empire and the rest of the world that Canada is not in this War for material gain but for the cause of freedom and democracy.

Mr. Rowell aroused his hearers to enthusiasm at the outset of his speech when he said "Let the Federal Government see to it that the blood of Canada's youth is not spilled on the plains of Flanders to enrich the grafters at home," and later found similar response when he declared:

"If there is one thing in Canada against which we must protest with all the emphasis possible, it is the graft in connection with the purchase and handling of War supplies. Is there anything more iniquitous and discreditable than men making ill-gotten gains out of the blood and sacrifice of our men? The Attorney-General of this province should take notice that if any man places himself within the criminal law in this respect justice will not be done until that man is punished to the hilt of the criminal law. In France and Russia they put the grafters in jail. Such men in this country should be jailed when found guilty."

Speaking of the discreditable record of the old Dominion Shell Committee, now superseded after an investigation of its work by Mr. D. A. Thomas on behalf of the British Minister of Munitions, Mr. Rowell said: "I know of nothing more humiliating than this. Canada was entrusted with this important phase of the Allies' operations and it had to be taken out of her hands. The only compensating feature is that Britain itself was able to find in Canada men fitted to do this work for it."

COAL PURCHASING SCANDAL AT VICTORIA

STILL another of the iniquities of the Tory patronage system was revealed at Victoria, B.C. last month when a Royal Commission enquiry was conducted by Mr. Hammet P. Hill of Ottawa into charges of graft and irregularities in the purchasing of coal for the Dominion Government dredging fleet in Pacific Coast waters. The evidence, which included the open admissions of Government officials and patronage politicians, showed that an official Government contract for coal was disregarded and the coal bought at much higher prices through the Secretary of the Conservative Association at Victoria, the latter benefitting personally to the extent of at least 50 cents a ton.

The formal charge was made by Mr. Joshua Kingham of Victoria, whose firm was awarded the official contract for the supply of coal to the Dominion Government dredges for the fiscal year 1913-14 at the rate of \$5.25 per ton. Mr. Kingham claimed that his firm received no orders in this time, but that the coal was bought from other parties at \$7 a ton and the government thus paid \$3,814 more than the contract price.

Cool Confession by Government Official.

The case was proved by the very first witness, John L. Nelson, who has been superintendent of dredging under the Federal Department of Public Works in British Columbia since March, 1913. Mr. Nelson coolly confessed that he had bought the coal from Kirk & Co. of Victoria, through W. H. Price, Secretary of the Victoria Conservative Association, that he knew the prices were higher than the coal could have been got from the Government contractor, that he had continued to certify the accounts of Kirk & Co. as "fair and just" long after he had received repeated notifications from other firms as to the lower prices they could deliver for. He declared that he had done this because of a "feeling of gratitude" toward Kirk & Co. and created something of a sensation in court when here marked:

"I have certified enough invoices as being at fair and just prices that I know are not fair and just."

J. L. Nelson, who was appointed to the position of dredge superintendent in British Columbia by Hon. Robert Rogers, formerly resided in Winnipeg where he was an active political protege of the Minister of Public Works prior to the latter's advent at Ottawa. Nelson held large contracts for the supply of telephone poles for the late Roblin government.

J. R. Fallis, Conservative M.P.P. for Peel, Ont., succeeded in securing for himself a complete monopoly for the sale of War horses to the Government in Peel County. How did Mr. Fallis get his monopoly? How did he get the official letter to Government buyers which was his warrant for monopoly? Did he get it by his own unaided efforts? Or did he enlist the services and good offices of Mr. Richard Blain, Federal Member for Peel? Tory Federal patronage usually is controlled by the Federal Member.