

# President Coaker's Letter to F.P.U. Members On the Formation of the National Government

(This letter appeared on July 19th, and is republished now at the request of Councils, in order to give the fishermen who were absent in July a chance to read it.)

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE F.P.U.

Dear Friends:—

Circumstances which I will briefly review brought about a dead lock in the Legislature, and after full consideration the Liberal-Union Party in the Legislature decided that the best interest of the Country would be best served, under the circumstances, by the formation of a New Government embracing both parties in the House.

Sir Edward Morris therefore complied with the terms of the Liberal-Union Party and tendered to His Excellency the Governor on Tuesday, July 17th, the resignation of the Morris Government. Therefore the Morris Administration went out of office, and Dr. Lloyd intimated to His Excellency that he was unable to form a Government but was willing to co-operate with the late Premier, Sir E. P. Morris, in forming a National Government. The Governor then summoned Sir Edward Morris to form a new Ministry, which was done.

The Liberal-Union Party possess half the seats in the Executive Council of the New Government. The members so appointed are: Messrs. Lloyd, Cliff, Hickman, Ellis, Halfyard and myself. Mr. Stone was appointed Minister of Marine and Fisheries, Mr. Halfyard was appointed Minister of Agriculture and Mines, and Dr. Lloyd was appointed Minister of Justice. Another Departmental Head will be selected from the Liberal-Union ranks later on.

I was strongly urged by all parties to take the position of Minister of Marine and Fisheries, but decided that my duty was to give all my attention to the work of the Union and the business of the Union Companies. Mr. Stone will consult me in relation to the work to be done by the Fisheries Department; therefore, the work in your behalf to be performed by that Department will not be neglected, and its policy will be directed by the desires of the Supreme Council Conventions.

The circumstances above referred to that necessitated the formation of a National Government are:—

1st.—The determination of the Old Government to pass an Act to prolong the life of the present Parliament, until a year after the war terminated, which might extend over a period of three years.

2nd.—The indifference of public opinion here and elsewhere respecting the Government's high-handed intentions to prolong Parliament.

3rd.—The unjust demand upon the time of most of our Party, and especially myself, to attend to business affairs at such a season of the year which would mean a fight of one month additional time if an Extension Bill was introduced in opposition to our wishes.

4th.—The horror of finding the Colony arrayed into Sectarian divisions in event of a General Election being held this Fall or later, if one Party was led by Premier Morris and the other by a leader selected by the Union.

5th.—The helpless condition of the Colony as a part of the Empire in event of the passing of an Act to prolong Parliament, opposed as such a Bill would be if passed in opposition to the Liberal-Union Party. Such action would have seriously aroused the Northern Districts, and not only would recruiting discontinue but the Colony would be persistently agitated for perhaps three years over

the high-handed proceedings of a Minority Government, in holding on to office after its Constitutional term of office had expired, and its impotency in handling large National issues such as confront the Colony.

6th.—The desirability of removing all possible hindrances in connection with the transportation of fish to the European markets, as a National Government would be strong enough to impress the Admiralty and take strong measures locally to commandeer local shipping if such was found necessary. The possibility of not being able to export fish to Italy and Greece, and perhaps to Spain, and the probability, in the event of such, of a big slump in the value of fish, was in itself sufficient justification for the formation of a National Government at this particular time. Had the price of fish declined to \$5 or less per qtl. because of the want of tonnage and that tonnage was short because of the inaction of the Government, or lack of strength to deal with large issues, which the Old Government lacked, we having refused to co-operate, the Country would have blamed me for not being broad enough to do my best for the Colony under such pressing circumstances. This matter of tonnage is of the utmost importance to the whole Colony, for unless fish can be exported to Europe, conditions would develop that would equal those of 1908, when fish was unsaleable for cash and was bartered at \$1.80 per quintal. Present indications point to a catch this year equal to that of 1908. My chief duty is to protect your interests respecting price for fish. Official information from the British Authorities places this matter in even a more serious position and hesitation on the Colony's part to take a plunge into a domain that no past Government ever dared to intrude, would in my opinion prove disastrous and mean semi-starvation for the men depending upon good prices for fish to meet the huge demands on their purses entailed by the high cost of living. Everything for us as a Colony depends upon high values this season for dry codfish, and if the securing of tonnage was within human achievement such was possible only through the backing and activity of a National Government in which the President of your Union held a strong position. The very first act of the New Government was to appoint a Subcommittee of the Executive consisting of Messrs. Crosbie, Hickman and myself to deal with the tonnage issue which has assumed such serious proportions.

7th.—The offer of the Old Government to adjust the Election problem, by giving the people the chance to oust from office anyone they wished next Spring, thus affording us an opportunity to place before the Country a new policy in line with the aspirations of the Fishermen, as outlined in the Catalina Platform, which policy would have been side tracked for perhaps three years had the Old Government been permitted to pass an Act to prolong the life of the present Parliament for a period extending a year after the war ended.

In 1913, we went to the Country as a part of the Liberal Party, and I as the head of the F.P.U. was to receive an appointment as member of the Executive Council. By the formation of a National Government we have an equal voice in the whole Government of the Colony, administer half the Departments of the Public Service and in the absence of Sir E. P. Morris, our nominee, Dr. Lloyd, will become Acting Premier. We have therefore secured by this co-operation as much power as a favourable General Election could bestow. Our decision to co-operate in the formation of the Nation-

al Government was unanimous. All the Union Members voted affirmatively.

We have not become responsible for any action of the Old Government, it must shoulder its own burden. We are responsible only for the conduct and transactions of the National Government dating from July 18th.

The Fishermen should indeed be proud of the position the F.P.U. has now attained. After 75 years of Responsible Government, the Fishermen's voice predominates for the first time in the Public Affairs of the Colony, and men directly responsible to the Fishermen have been called upon by the Crown to steer the Country through the breakers at the most critical and serious period in the history of the Colony.

The New Government is not a Coalition Government, it is a National Government, and Sir Edward Morris's resignation of office on the 17th of July ended the life of the Old Government and the People's Party, and ushered in a distinctly New Government, and created a National Party.

We were actuated in our action by one motive only, and that was to place Country first and do all possible to protect the Colony and people at a time when the darkest clouds Terra Nova ever beheld covered the horizon. I have not sought personal aggrandisement. I have undertaken a heavy additional burden, at a time when other demands upon my time and attention had increased many fold. I have no desire to remain a public man. If I obeyed the dictates of a free will I would prefer devoting my entire time to the business of the Fishermen that I am held responsible for. I have allowed no consideration but that of RIGHT and NATIONAL DUTY to guide me in the decision I have arrived at to enter a National Government.

I cannot be of any use to the Fishermen there, unless I am backed by their strong and general support. I will only remain where I am as long as I feel sure that I possess their confidence and have insisted upon the New Government appealing to the Electorate at the earliest possible moment, which will be next Spring. The men who made me what I am, as a Public man, will then have an opportunity to continue their confidence or withdraw it; but whatever that decision will be, all may feel assured that our recent action was entirely in their best interests as far as our inner knowledge directed us. We will strive to supply the Country with a clean, honest, energetic, and broad Government, and when I find that such virtues are lacking in the National Government, I will cease to retain the position accepted from His Excellency on Tuesday, July 18th, as one of his advisers.

My eight years' term of office as President of the F.P.U., and my endeavours during that trying and perplexing period, to do my duty fearlessly and conscientiously will incline you all to trust me fully, and confide in my sincerity. The principles which the F.P.U. has endeavoured to maintain will not be sacrificed or even impaired by political expediency. Our cause is clearly above political party considerations, and our labours have been blessed, and I trust the future will bring forth fruit that will cause one and all of us to be prouder than ever of our Country and Organization.

Faithfully yours,

W. F. COAKER,

President.

St. John's, July 18th, 1917.

## RANDOM COMMENTS

By "PRO PATRIA"

SHAME! SHAME!! SHAME!!!

"O Shame, where is thy Blush?"

The fearless comments of "Miranda" anent the miserly pittance paid to lady employees in stores must meet with the approval of every true creature. The old relation of Master and Slave was in many instances a better relation than now exists between the employer and the employed. Many of these slave masters tried to obey the Christian law by remembering those in bonds as bound with them, who loved and cared for them and was loved by the slaves in return.

There can be very little love existing between underpaid servant and greedy master to-day. Rather, is there a desire for bitter revenge. While the slave masters infringed upon the Christian law by depriving servants of their liberty, where is the liberty given to-day to workers as the just reward of faithful and efficient service? Is it not bondage to be compelled to be servile to any class of work, and in return receive insufficient

Such a condition opens up a necessity to stoop to dishonest methods in order to secure by stealth what they have justly earned by labor. Our social welfare should be guarded by the enforcing of laws compelling employers to pay a living wage at least.

"Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage."

So that liberty can exist under conditions of bondage. Nor can social bondage exist under certain conditions of liberty.

These lady employees are as much slaves to their cruel masters (driven to do any desired work) as if they were in chains, and the only interest in their welfare is measured by the extent of their service. Limited demand for female workers at more remunerative wages forces this condition of bondage. It is the best they can do and must suffer and endure it. The employers on the other hand refuse to acknowledge merit by increasing their salaries. The mean, unmanly creatures create capital out of these condi-

tions instead of setting a just standard of reward for work. They say, "You cannot do better, less Davenports and cry, 'A horse, elsewhere and what are you going to do about it?' Methinks they are very nicely combined to keep down the rate of wages and everything else—except what they sell."

What a dangerous hive of busy bees we are being stung by? Love and humanity is only measured by the "cash nexus" existing, and there is no responsibility of the stronger for the welfare of the weaker. Where is the boasted gallantry and chivalry of these men?

Such degrading of the weaker sex would not be tolerated in any other country. There is a passage of Scripture which reads,—"By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread," and this is a direct injunction that we were created to work out our own existence. There is no passage which says, "By the breaking of thy heart," so it is evident that a Creator intended that everyone should be happy with their work.

Are the ladies referred to by "Miranda" happy and contented with their positions? If not, are there men deadened of conscience and void of humanity enough to say without a blush, We are responsible? There are not, and yet you are responsible and the ghosts of those you are slowly starving may yet haunt you. In a frenzy

of terror the "Richards" of to-day will yet spring from their sleepless Davenports and cry, "A horse, a horse, my 'business' for a horse."

The true gentleman finds that he is in duty bound to honor and protect the gentler sex, but instead we find that employers take advantage of their helplessness, put them into a constant condition of bondage by forcing them to accept the terms of wages and employment which they dictate to them. Such a condition compels ladies to exist in the lowest of servility.

To be kind and courteous to our peers is all very well, but it is fairness, courtesy and consideration to those in limited, or dependent positions, which constitute the true test of the gentleman. True aristocracy is not a matter of possessions, but a quality of spirit. For your names sake, for honors sake, for shames sake, give those weaker vessels a square deal. A sense of justice and fair play must suggest a better wage for your lady employees.

Unmerited Reproach.

A golf professional, while giving a lesson to a pupil, said, "You know, sir, you lift your elbow too much to play golf properly." The new member replied, "How dare you! I'll report you to the committee! I'm a lifelong teetotaler!"

## An Historian In Parliament

"There is a well-known saying, familiar to generations of examination candidates, that 'History is past politics; politics is present history,' but it is not often that the student of

past politics has an opportunity of playing any great part in present history," says the Glasgow Herald. "The English Education Bill which has just been introduced is the work of a Minister of Education who is a great historian, but it is probable that the Prime Minister was guided to a wise choice rather because of Mr.

Fisher's distinguished record as a University administrator than because of his reputation as our highest authority upon the legal and administrative work of the great Napoleon."

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