

MEIGHEN IS HAPPY IN OPPOSITION, HE ASSURES AUDIENCE

Not a Bloodthirsty Person,
Those at Victoriaville Are
Informed

CONSCRIPTION AND WAR

Empire Relations and Other
Subjects Were Discussed
Fearlessly by Conserva-
tive Speakers

(Special to The Gazette.)

Victoriaville, Que., November 22.—Nothing of the Jeremiah of which Liberals are so fond at times of calling him, showed about the Right Hon. Arthur Meighen in his visit to Victoriaville. On the contrary, the Conservative leader told an audience of about 1,000 people who gathered at the city hall this evening that he was a cheerful loser and had never spent two such happy years as since he had left power. What he did wish to tell the people of Quebec was something of his true views and ideas, so that they would not continue to picture him as a blood-thirsty person always hungering to get into a war, as some people in Quebec had been led to believe by Mr. Mackenzie King's statements. "On the contrary, we had not any more warlike intentions than Mr. King himself, and we could have had less," said Mr. Meighen. Mr. Meighen spoke in the two languages and continues to show improvement in French, while his English speech was up to standard. He was given a fine hearing, which worthily ended a day of happy receptions both here and in Richmond this morning. There was an informal luncheon at the home of Wilfrid Laliberte, K.C., Conservative candidate in 1921, a round of visits in the afternoon, a banquet at the Bernier Hotel in the evening, and the evening's meeting. There were other excellent speeches besides those of Mr. Meighen, for he also spoke at the banquet. Hon. Rodolphe Monty made a good impression. Hon. Andre Fauteaux joined the party here this evening and shared in the honors, and Mr. Laliberte was well treated by his fellow-townsmen.

The matters of conscription, of the war and Empire relations were handled by the speakers in fearless fashion, even as they might have been treated in an Ontario town. "I know," said Mr. Laliberte at the big city hall meeting, "that many of you have come here out of curiosity; you wish to see the man who has been so violently denounced to you as the enemy of our race, but let me tell you that even as the beginning of fear is the sign of wisdom, so will your curiosity be the beginning of your admiration."

There was not a whit more sincerity among the Liberals in their tariff talks in the West than on what they call the Imperial issue in the province of Quebec, said Hon. Mr. Meighen, after referring to the attitude which different leaders of the Liberal party had taken in the matter of fiscal protection in 1921. He dealt with the Government attitude on the Turkish question and the answer of Mr. King that Parliament must be consulted.

That talk was rubbish, for, of course, Parliament had to sanction all action of that kind. Liberals did not talk of Empire matters in Ontario and the West as they did in Quebec. There was inconsistency throughout in the Government attitude. Incidentally, Mr. Meighen referred to the sales tax, saying from what he knew of the Government he would not be surprised if there would not be a humiliating back-down in this regard also. It was legislation that had been ill-digested, crude and impossible, and while the Government was not empowered to do it, since Parliament had passed the law on their advice, it would be just in line with past conduct if they swallowed themselves and advised the public to evade the new sales tax law.

Never had there been in Canada a betrayal more base in operation than in regard to campaign promises as to railways, and their record in that was equal to their record in the so-called Imperial issue.

TALKED OF IMPERIALISM.

"I have been described to you as an aggressive imperialist seeking to

get into every new war. If hankering to get into this war or that war for glory means imperialism then I am the strongest man in Canada against imperialism. On this issue I stand in the shoes of those whom I follow as leader of the Conservative party, however unworthy I am, Cartier and Macdonald, and in asking for the support of Conservatives in this province, and of Liberals also, I do not ask you to move away from the right or left of the lines they pursued. Humanity had suffered more in the past few years than in the course of centuries before, and this had given occasion for the demagogues to rise. The late Government had in all its acts sought the welfare of the country, and he believed that in similar circumstances, Cartier and Macdonald would have pursued the same course.

He took it for granted that, included in his audience were people who had been told, especially by a hostile press, that he had no sympathy with the aspirations, sentiments or feelings of French-Canadians, and that he harbored antipathy to them. A great campaign had been waged to induce that belief, and never had there been a more virile, vicious and dishonest campaign against a public man. They should not imagine that the campaign originated in the province of Quebec. It originated in the Liberal party and the purpose was to get votes. Mr. Meighen referred to the attack which the Toronto Globe had made against him on August 4, 1920, in the course of which article it had been asserted that he had attacked the French-Canadians in a speech in the House of Commons, and that Laurier had said after the alleged speech that he, Meighen, would regret it, for it would cost him French-Canadian votes. The Globe had been challenged to produce the speech or to show that he had ever made such a speech out of Parliament. The Globe had been silent.

CONSCRIPTION CHARGES.

Referring to conscription and the charge that it had been designed especially against Quebec, Mr. Meighen pointed out that a campaign had been waged against him in Alberta by Liberal newspapers, including the Edmonton Bulletin, then owned and edited by a former Liberal Cabinet minister, because they claimed the law was against the West and too easy in Quebec. The people of Canada will revolt when the new sales tax goes into effect next January, if it does go into effect, said Mr. Meighen.

During the last winter the country had witnessed extreme duties because of the policy of the Government, which was hampering the progress of the country. Exports had been steadily decreasing, notwithstanding the fact that pulp exports had grown. Imports had increased. We were selling our assets at the rate of 40 millions a year. The increase in the British preference had put many workers out of employment, and had driven them to the United States. Manufacturers were afraid to expand, and, no wonder, with the Prime Minister going up and down the country saying that the downward trend of the tariff was a step in the right direction. The country, said Mr. Meighen, is in a state of hesitancy and uncertainty, and, consequently, stagnation follows.

Mr. Meighen recalled that during the 1921 campaign Sir Lomer Gouin had said that we owed so much money to the United States that we could not resist annexation much longer, and yet the first address from the throne of the new Government had said that Canada was in the strongest position of any country which had taken part in the war, and Hon. Mr. Lapointe went from place to place saying: "All this talk of a Montreal newspaper about the whisper of death is nonsense, and Canada is in an excellent position."

The Government, in spite of higher taxation, has added a hundred millions to the debt to the United States.

Hon. Mr. Meighen concluded: "There is a great awakening of Conservative sentiment throughout the country against the Government, and in an appeal to the country, and they can make it whenever they like, they will receive such a shock as will show them that the citizens of Canada will not be governed by policies of trickery and deception."

CAMPAIGN FOR TRUTH.

Hon. Mr. Monty went at once into what he termed the campaign which had been waged to depict Mr. Meighen as the enemy of French-Canadians and Catholics, and animated by hatred against them.

No one had a right to slander a public man in such fashion any more than to slander a private citizen, and he proposed with his friends to conduct a campaign in Quebec that would make the truth clear, and answer the defamation and slander. Does a man who hates the French-Canadians take the pains and trouble to study the French language as Mr. Meighen had done? Why learn the language of a race

one hated? Had Mr. Meighen showed hatred in taking four French-Canadian Catholics into his Government? Mr. Meighen could have said he would have no French-Canadian ministers in his Government, since there were no French-Canadian supporters of his Government in the House of Commons, but he had refused to take that way, and would not consent to form a government unless the French-Canadians were represented in it.

Let Quebec judge Mr. Meighen on his acts, and not according to campaign against him. In 1921 Mr. Meighen could have kept power by going to the English Protestant provinces and saying to them: "Quebec has formed a bloc against me, and are you English-Protestants going to permit an English Protestant Prime Minister to be defeated by a French-Canadian Catholic bloc?" Mr. Meighen could have used the very arms against the Liberals that they were using against him in Quebec. He could have used prejudice against prejudice and kept himself in power, but preferred defeat to doing anything to divide Canada, and govern without the aid and co-operation of Quebec.

Mr. Monty discussed fiscal matters and the railway issue, reviewing the promises made by the Liberals to get rid of the National Railways. Instead of disposing of the roads, the Government had invested still more, including two millions for the Scribe Hotel in Paris and a million and a half for a site in Toronto. He criticized the giving of a contract for 3,600 railway cars in the United States, especially at a time of unemployment in Canada.

Mr. Laliberte, in dealing with conscription, objected to Mr. Meighen getting all the blame for that law, and believed the sense of justice of the people of Quebec would not continue to accept that viewpoint. Conscription had been enacted for all of Canada, said Mr. Laliberte, and Mr. Meighen and others of the Government had known it would cause misery in all parts of Canada, and not alone in Quebec.

They had sincerely believed it to be necessary, believing the soldiers in the trenches should be reinforced. What of the Liberals who had been for conscription? he asked. Mackenzie King had promptly put the light in the window for them and they were given the best of everything. Mr. Maclean had been made a judge, and it was said Mr. Fielding was even a greater power behind the throne than Sir Lomer Gouin.

Mr. Meighen detested war like most sensible people, but Canada could not remain isolated any more than can an individual isolate himself from his fellows.

LAURIER AND WAR.

Hon. Mr. Fauteaux congratulated Mr. Laliberte for his bravery in appearing with a man who had been designated in Quebec as a monster, an enemy of the province and of all of Canada. Mr. Fauteaux eulogized the memory of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, though a political opponent, and recalled how proud French-Canadians had been of him in 1897 when he went to his first Imperial Conference. It was at that conference that the great French-Canadian had made the engagement for Canada that when England was at war Canada would be ready to aid. That was the first time in the history of England that such an engagement had been undertaken, and it had defined our Imperial relations, which relations had not been changed since in that regard.

Mr. Fauteaux referred to the stand which Mr. Meighen had taken on the renewal of the Japanese Treaty at the 1921 Imperial Conference, a stand which had led to the Washington Disarmament Conference. That, said Mr. Fauteaux, was the work of a man who loves blood, according to Liberal propaganda.

John A. Sullivan, K.C., of Montreal, addressed the meeting briefly.