

Sir Lomer Gouin

There will be widespread regret, not confined to his own political party, at the announcement that the Premier of Quebec, Sir Lomer Gouin, will very shortly retire from his position and from public life. Rumors of such an intention on his part have been current for some time and now they appear to have authoritative confirmation. Sir Lomer has presided over the Provincial affairs of Quebec for a long period of years during which, as even his political opponents will admit, he has given the Province an able and faithful service that has kept it in a foremost place among the Provinces. Under his administration Quebec has made marked progress in the field of affairs which falls within the sphere of local government. Retiring, he will have the satisfaction of knowing that he leaves the Province in a flourishing position, in a sound financial condition, with more than ordinary contentment among the people, and with all its great industries giving promise of continued prosperity. Quebec has much reason to remember, and surely will remember, with satisfaction the long and honorable service of Sir Lomer Gouin.

A Democratic Dictator

MR. W. M. HUGHES, the Premier of the Commonwealth of Australia, is a gentleman whose numerous talents occasionally outrun his discretion. He is an able man and eloquent speaker. Occasionally in his many speeches in England he manifested a disposition to govern the Empire generally. It is evident that at home he is inclined to monopolize the powers of the Government and that he expects his colleagues who go abroad to regard themselves as his deputies. During his long absence from Australia the duties of Acting Prime Minister were discharged by the Treasurer, Mr. W. A. Watt. Mr. Watt recently came to England on a political and financial mission. That anybody but Mr. Hughes himself should do anything of importance in Australian affairs seems to be regarded by the Premier as an interference with his authority. Mr. Watt, apparently, has suffered embarrassment from this disposition on the part of his chief. While the Treasurer has been carrying on negotiations in London respecting his mission, the Premier has been cabling to the British Government on the same subject. Mr. Watt, it seems, had also been authorized to act as a plenipotentiary for Australia at the approaching Spa conference, and here also Mr. Hughes intervened by issuing instructions which Mr. Watt was unwilling to receive. "I decline," said Mr. Watt, to act as plenipotentiary with the powers of a telegraph messenger." So Mr. Watt has resigned. It looks as though Mr. Hughes will have to come again from Aus-

tralia and take up personally the duties that he seems so unwilling to entrust to his colleagues. A democrat Mr. Hughes has always claimed to be. A democratic dictator he seems to be.

A Machine that Fails

OUR American neighbors think they are the most democratic people in the world. Certainly they use a large amount of machinery designed to make democracy safe for the nation. But much of it fails to work. On this side of the border, as in the mother country from which we obtain most of our ideas of government, there is in our statute law an almost complete absence of recognition of political parties. The party system is usually the very foundation of our political organization, yet, except in rare instances in Canada, no reference to parties can be found in our laws. In the United States parties are recognized in many ways. There is frequent reference in the statutes to the selection of men for public offices as representatives of the respective parties—so many men to be of one party, so many of another, etc. On our side of the line parties are free to form their own organizations and go their own way about making nominations. In the United States, in recent years, this freedom has been treated as an opportunity for "bosses" to govern. As a remedy for this alleged evil, and to ensure a true and independent expression of opinion, the State has undertaken to manage what are called the "primaries," elections being held to allow the voters to indicate their preference in the selection of candidates. It is only at the first stage of the election game that this system prevails. In the end, the results of the primaries are entirely ignored.

The story of the recent Republican convention in Chicago indicates how completely the primary system fails. These preliminary trials very clearly marked Messrs. Wood, Lowden and Johnson as the leaders of Republican opinion. Yet when the convention met at Chicago the fact soon became apparent that none of them could be nominated. The convention ignored all these preliminary tests and selected as candidates men who had received but a small degree of support in the primaries. In the light of the proceedings connected with the Republican nomination thoughtful Americans must wonder what good is accomplished by the primary system. If it was designed, as some believed, to shut out the leading politicians from party activity, and nominate candidates without their help, it is a complete failure. Indeed, it was only when all the leaders whom the primaries had set in front had been eliminated and the "old guard" of politicians took the matter in hand that a nomination became possible. And in the end, as usual, the political managers had their way.

Mr. Hoover's Position

A LARGE portion of the American public not tied very closely to old party organizations formed such a favorable impression of the character and capacity of Mr. Herbert Hoover, as manifested in his handling of food problems at home and in Europe, that they regarded him as the right man for the office of President. While playing a very prominent part in American affairs for some years, he had not participated in any party movements, and nobody seemed able to tell whether he should be called a Republican or a Democrat. Within the ranks of both parties there were influential movements toward a Hoover nomination—not organized and well financed movements such as supported the candidature of several other men, but quiet independent efforts to put forward Mr. Hoover's name. Even after he had acknowledged that his political sympathies, so far as he had any, had been with the Republican party, there were men in the Democratic ranks who still thought he could be a Democratic candidate. At the Republican convention at Chicago there was no Hoover organization. Mr. Hoover obtained a few votes at the beginning and held them. Many there were, however, who, feeling assured that the leading candidates would have to stand aside, thought that when the time arrived to drop them and concentrate on another, Mr. Hoover's name would come to the front. There is not much room for doubt that if the party leaders could have been brought to an acceptance of Mr. Hoover, his election would have been assured. But the party leaders evidently feared that a man of Mr. Hoover's independent character would not be a docile instrument in their hands. They turned to Mr. Harding, and that gentleman, a respectable Senator accustomed to the party discipline, received the nomination.

How the dissenters and their friends will regard the Harding nomination is not yet quite clear. Senator Johnson, for example, sent a personal telegram of congratulation to Mr. Harding, but it is noticed that when Mr. Johnson returned to Washington he was not among the many who called on Mr. Harding. Mr. Johnson is discontented; a bolt on the part of himself and his friends is still a possibility. Mr. Hoover, however, has promptly taken the public into his confidence and declared his intention to support Mr. Harding. His declaration to that effect cannot fail to have a wide influence in rallying thousands of independent voters to the Republican standard. Mr. Hoover's statement of the situation contains some political wisdom that is worthy of consideration, even beyond the boundaries of the United States.