

AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN VIEW OF THE REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF PARLIAMENT.

WITHOUT making any prediction as to whether or not the further extension of Parliament asked for by the Government will be approved by the Opposition, the moment would appear to be opportune to analyse the political situation.

Two prime questions are, whether in view of the war, it would be justifiable to override the constitution without appealing to the people, and whether the record of the Government entitle them to a continuance in office.

The law is clear that the life of Parliament is five years. The constitutional term of the present Parliament expired in October 1916, and since then the government of the country, has not been by the people. It is an arbitrary Government and Parliament kept in existence by extraordinary legislation, respecting which the people have not been consulted. In a democratic country the people's rights in regard to their government can not be too strongly or zealously safe guarded, and there is always grave danger in establishing precedents which tend to minimize or prejudice these rights. Governments and Parliaments are the mouthpieces and representatives of the people; they acquire all their powers from the people, and have in fact no status or authority except from and through the people. The extension of Parliament agreed upon between the two political Parties last year was undoubtedly a subversion of the rights of the public. The justification for it were the unprecedented and perilous circumstances arising from the war and the fact that public opinion seemed to be in favour of it. But the question that now arises is, how far and how long is it safe and wise to go in that direction? What right would the Members of Parliament have to assume that in voting for a further extension of Parliament they would be voting as the people would wish them to do. Neither the press nor the flotsam and jetsam of public conversation, which usually sway the average Member of Parliament, is at all equivalent to the polled vote of the people. Experienced politicians know that a preponderating majority of the electorate are of the silent type, who record their views only through the medium of the ballot box. It would seem to be idle, therefore, to argue that a further extension of Parliament would be in harmony with the maintenance of the true principles of a free democracy.

Government Not a Model One.

If the Government were a model one with a record for solid achievement towards the public welfare, there would be less cause for alarm, but standing out clear and bold are the facts that the Government never have captured the imagination of the people and never have had the full confidence even of their own political friends. Wherever one may go in this big country to-day he will find a strong undercurrent of intense feeling against the administration. Judged by any fair and reasonable standard or test that may be applied, the Government are found sadly wanting. Their record

is one of shuffling, trifling, muddling and boodling. One looks in vain through the pages of their history for any act tending to ameliorate the conditions or promote the welfare of the masses; on the contrary there is a plentitude of evidence that they are a class and interest loving Government and Party.

The Nationalist Blunder.

At the very outset a grave and serious mistake was made by Sir Robert Borden in forming a Cabinet composed of two groups of men diametrically opposed to one another, on one of the most important of all questions, loyalty and fealty to the British Crown. "**Not a dollar, not a man to help the Empire**" was the battle cry of the Nationalist wing of the Cabinet while the slogan of the Tory wing was "**Imperialism to the hilt.**" This ill assorted combination came as a shock to the Country, and it has been fraught with the gravest consequence. If any discontent exists to-day between the two races in Canada it is largely traceable to that act of the Conservative Premier. The inclusion of the Nationalists in his Cabinet was a direct encouragement to them to pursue their vicious propaganda which meant **sowing the seeds of discord.** The purpose underlying this political move of the Premier is obvious. It was to strike a blow at Sir Wilfrid Laurier's prestige in his native Province by disturbing the minds of the people and creating new political alignments. The wisest part of statesmanship is to reconcile and harmonize conflicting interests especially those affecting race and religion, but Conservative statesmanship evidently is the very reverse.

A Weak Cabinet.

But apart from the hybrid character of the Cabinet its personell was and is distinctly weak. There is not a man of great outstanding ability in the list, and some of them have records which do not give assurance of honest and efficient administration. One of them is today permitted to remain in office notwithstanding a judgment of the Justice of the High Court of Manitoba, condemning him for serious maladministration and misappropriation of public funds. The public men who administered the affairs of this Country in the older days were giants compared with the men who are in office to-day.

Extravagance.

In the realm of finance the career of the Government has been one of extraordinary extravagance. Notwithstanding that Sir Robert Borden when in opposition declared that the Liberal Government's ordinary expenditures of \$79,000,000 per annum were abnormal and prima facie evidence of corruption, his Government in the three years (of normal peace times) from 1911 to 1914, increased the Country's ordinary expenditures from \$87,000,000 to \$135,000,000. The country practically stood still