

GOING AFTER the HARD-SHELLS

What some of the practical people in the West think of the Union Government; and how they miss it



DOES F. B. Carvell, the new Minister of Public Works, look like a man who would hitch up with a Conservative majority for anything less national than winning the war?

WHAT Editor McLean, M.P., said in the days of yore about Sir Clifford Sifton is much less important now than what either of them thinks of a new national Government that left out both of them.

By FRANK MAITLAND

UNION Government was announced at a time when the average citizen, long ago convinced that it was desirable, had nevertheless long since given up hope that our political leaders could compose their differences, agree to give and take on minor points and unite for the better service of our country in its time of crisis. He had long ceased to expect it, but the average citizen welcomed the announcement none the less heartily. He had long since ceased to fear

statesman and Prime Minister the possession of those peculiarly magical gifts of leadership which were Macdonald's and Howe's and are still Laurier's.

It happens that in the city of Winnipeg, where I live, I am well acquainted with several citizens of the hard shell variety politically, some of whom regularly vote in a way which does not commend itself, to my judgment, and others of whom have even more enthusiasm than I have myself for the party that usually—nay, to be quite frank, invariably—has commanded my vote and has never had to worry about it. Chatting with these hard-shell friends, I found that whether Conservative or Liberal, they were equally suspicious of this new departure. To their infinite disgust, union government is apparently much too popular just now in Winnipeg to be criticized very severely in the open; but in private conversation dire things are prophesied and a short life predicted for this new curiosity in Canadian Governments. Quoting no names, and careful to violate no confidences, I propose to present herewith, as the title indicates, the opinions held regarding union government by a few typical hard-shells—and others.

"BORDEN has been too confoundedly credulous and confiding," growled one nationally known Winnipeg Conservative. "Most of these excellent gentlemen from the Liberal party, whom he has taken into the new government, and whom he expects us to support, went to him fresh from conferences with Sir Wilfrid, George P. Graham, 'Bill' Pugsley and 'Ned' Macdonald. Didn't we read in the papers how Newton Wesley Rowell travelled back and forth by train in company with the white plumes between Ottawa and Toronto? Wasn't 'Jim' Calder closeted with Sir Wilfrid up to the very last minute? Of course, it is possible they spent the time talking about the war and the weather and the Red Cross Campaign, or swapping yarns about old times. Perhaps they were trying to figure out the best way to help

Borden form a union government that would unite the energies of the whole nation in this one supreme task of winning the war. I think that's the way it is usually expressed in the cant and twaddle of the day. But then again, it is more than possible they were studying out ways and means of getting the Grit party out of a bad hole and putting Sir Wilfrid back again in the Premier's chair. I have had a good many years' experience in politics and I am pretty well acquainted with the character and methods of 'Jim' Calder and A. L. Sifton. They are playing a shrewd game, and they will play it to the limit. 'Don't they want to win the war?' Of course they do. But if they can, incidentally, win a victory for the Grit party, they will do so."

"I TELL you it's all a plant," he continued. "You remember that convention last August. Who pulled the strings behind the scenes? 'Jim' Calder. No, of course, I wasn't there; but don't tell me anything different, for I know as much about it as if I had been there. 'Skipper Jim' Calder and A. L. Sifton were playing the party game then for all that they knew, and they are two wise birds who know a whole lot. Just wait and see."

"Well, I am willing to wait and I am content to hope," I replied. "But what do you expect that I shall see?"

"You will see a good many things you won't like after the elections are over. Won't the government win? Why, of course, it will win, for the simple reason that things are apparently fixed just now so that it can't lose. The way things are, the result will be nearly unanimous one way or the other in most of the constituencies. Sir Wilfrid, of course, will have sixty or more out-and-out supporters from Quebec and he will get a scattering of others from the other provinces, for plenty of people are not prepared to swallow union government. There will be another Cave of Adullam and 'everyone that is in distress, and everyone that is in debt, and everyone that is discontented' will gather under the leadership of the old chieftain. Say he gets eighty-five or ninety in all. I don't think that's putting it too high. The government will have the balance of the two hundred and thirty-four seats. Nice, comfortable majority, you say? So it would be, if you could depend on it. But remember that half the cabinet is Grit and that a big part of the union government supporters in the House will be—well, Unionists who were out-and-out Grits the day before yesterday. Calder and Sifton will see to it that the government supporters from Saskatchewan and Alberta will be the same hard boiled variety who howled down Turritt at that convention last August."

Did it ever occur to you that it might be an easy matter for Calder and Sifton to get Crerar, who, to do him justice, is above any conscious political trickery, but who is, nevertheless, an absolute fanatic in his devotion to the radical planks in the western farmers' platform to make some impossible demands of the Premier about the time Parliament meets in its first session? When Sir Robert refuses, as he must, don't you imagine it would be a mighty easy thing for Calder and Sifton and the rest of them to resign and swing the votes of their western members and a good many of the eastern members against Borden? Don't tell me that a Nova Scotia Grit will be any less a Grit because he happens to be elected as a Unionist. What then? A compromise with Laurier, of course. He would have to agree to support a radical fiscal programme, which he wouldn't like, in order to get back into power. But would he do it? Would a hungry bull-dog bite a tramp? Conscription, you say? Well, by that time the drafted men will be in the army, and a good many of them overseas. No use squabbling over

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J. G. O'DONOGHUE, K.C., very nearly M.P., looked a little while ago as though he might have been Minister of Labour. And the Labour portfolio must be important, considering the long time it takes to get it manned.



WHEN in doubt as to what might be the clear-cut win-the-election policy of the Opposition, in the coming campaign, one might ring up "Alec" Smith, supreme chief organizer. One of the most interesting men in Canada.