

THE NATIONAL LIBERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A NOTABLE advance in the history of progressive Liberalism in Canada was recorded at Ottawa on Monday, December 20th. On the initiative of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and in accordance with preliminary plans which will be explained in recording the proceedings, representative Liberals from all parts of Canada met in the Leader's office in the House of Commons, for the purpose of constituting a general advisory committee of the Liberal Party of Canada.

The spirit of the movement, essentially democratic in its inception, was explained by Sir Wilfrid and a broad outline of suggested procedure, equally democratic in plan and working, as it would provide for proper representation of every Liberal organization and body in the Dominion on the proposed Central Committee, was also offered by the Leader. The decision to adopt the proposal was immediate and unanimous and the meeting proceeded at once to business.

Aims Outlined by Sir Wilfrid.

Sir Wilfrid, who occupied the chair, opened the meeting by explaining at length the purport and meaning of the movement. Briefly stated, he said that being convinced that the conditions resulting from the War would bring about a new political and economic era in Canada, he felt it to be necessary that the Liberal Party should direct its special attention towards a profound study of the very serious and important problems with which the country will be faced. Apart too from the great problems created by the War, reforms of many long standing abuses were necessary. There never was a time in the history of Canada when it was more imperative that the best minds of the community should give the most serious thought to political and financial conditions and problems, and in this respect Liberalism must be in the van. Liberalism would be derelict in its duty to the country if it did not look into the future and be prepared for a solution of the grave difficulties which now confront and will confront Canada.

There was necessity also, he said, for more aggressive and earnest work in spreading the doctrines and principles of Liberalism, in bringing about proper cohesion of the interests of the party in the various provinces, and generally in welding Liberalism into a strong, effective fighting force for the good of the country. The attainment of these objects, he considered, would be greatly facilitated, if not best accomplished, by the appointment of a committee of able Liberals to act as an Advisory body, which would be representative of Liberalism throughout Canada, both outside and inside of Parliament. He emphasized the point that one of the underlying principles of the plan was to give Liberals outside of Parliament a voice in the active councils and direction of the Party, which he thought was very much to be desired.

War Prevented General Convention.

But for the War, Sir Wilfrid said, it had been his intention to call a general convention of the

Party for last June, similar to that held in 1893, and he held the view that it would be desirable to call such a convention at which the full voice of Liberalism from the Atlantic to the Pacific would have expression, when the time is opportune after the War. In this connection, the Advisory Committee would be of great service in arranging the necessary preliminaries and in assisting in the shaping of a forward policy for discussion and approval by the convention.

Plan of Representation.

Sir Wilfrid then explained the plan suggested for the organization of the Committee, which was as follows:—

For the purpose of the composition of the Committee, which it was suggested should at first number 45, with power to add to its number, the Dominion was divided into four districts as follows:

1. Maritime Provinces, 10 members.
2. Quebec, 10 members.
3. Ontario, 10 members.
4. Western Provinces and Yukon, 10 members.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier to have the right to nominate five members at large, and the Committee to have the right to add ten or more members at large.

How Committee was Nominated.

How thoroughly democratic was the method of selecting or nominating members to the Committee may be gathered from the following detail:

For Ontario, the ten members were selected as follows: three to be nominated by Federal Members of Parliament and Senators, one by the Liberal Provincial Leader, one each by the General Reform Association of Ontario and the Federated Liberal Clubs of Ontario, and four by Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

For Quebec, the ten members were selected as follows: three by the Federal Members of Parliament and Senators, one by the Provincial Liberal Leader, one each by the Montreal Liberal Clubs and the Quebec Liberal Clubs, and four by Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

For the Western Provinces, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, one member from each province was nominated by the Federal Members of Parliament and Senators, and one each by the Liberal Leader of each Province acting in conjunction with the Provincial Liberal Association of his province, the total of ten being made up by two nominations at large from the Western Provinces by Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

For the Maritime Provinces, the ten members were selected as follows: for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, two members each nominated by the Federal Members of Parliament and Senators and one each by the Provincial Liberal Leader acting in conjunction with the Provincial Liberal Association; for Prince Edward Island, one member nominated by the Federal Members of Parliament and Senators and one by the Provincial Liberal Leader acting in conjunction with the Provincial Liberal Association; Sir Wilfrid Laurier naming two members at large from the Maritime Provinces.