

Ottawa Government Must Choose New Leader

**Retirement of Sir Robert Borden, Previously Postponed, Expected at End of Session—
Party Caucus Will Decide Policy—Canadian Autonomy Within Empire, and Moderate
Tariff Will Probably be Main Planks in Platform—Meighen Best Guess for Leader**

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WITH the budget disposed of and the end of the session in sight, there is growing restlessness among the government ranks as to the future of the party. It is felt that the long-confused political situation must be cleared or the Unionist party will disintegrate completely. Followers of the government see opposite them two parties, with definite policies, with aggressive leaders, and with active organizations from coast to coast. As for the Unionists, they have nothing more to stand upon than the record of the government; they have no drafted platform; they are uncertain as to whether Sir Robert Borden proposes to remain as the head of the government, and there is not the slightest semblance of a political organization.

It was expected that immediately Sir Robert returned from his long and much-needed holiday a caucus would be called, a platform enunciated and the future settled. But there are no evidences so far of a caucus, and the supporters of the government are as much in the dark as ever. As for the cause of the delay, no one knows. Sir Robert has taken no private members into his confidence and few, if any, cabinet ministers.

Will Retire at Close of Session

The lack of any positive information, combined with the delay in calling a caucus, lends credence to the growing belief in political circles that Sir Robert Borden has finally and definitely made up his mind to retire. If he were retiring, it would be unwise and unfair to the cabinet to make the announcement in the middle of a session and precipitate a political crisis with the legislative program but half passed. The natural thing would be to wait until the session was nearly over. While Sir Robert has apparently told no one of his plans, there is good reason to believe that this is the cause of the delay, and that the last week of the session Sir Robert will summon his followers together, announce his firm intention to retire from public life, and outline his own personal views as to the future of the party.

Postponed Retiring Last Christmas

It is no political secret, of course, that Sir Robert came to this same conclusion last Christmas. After his return from the peace conference he found he was unable to carry on with the same energy as in the past. He consulted several leading Montreal specialists, and they strongly advised him to give up immediately political life, otherwise they would not answer for the consequences. Sir Robert communicated to his colleagues these opinions and announced his decision to retire. The question of leadership immediately arose. The cabinet was unable to unite on a successor. A Meighen boom started which frightened the ministry, few of whom, strange to say, were in favor of the brilliant young minister of the interior. As a result of the division the ministers fairly begged the prime minister on bended knee to remain at his post. They suggested that he take a prolonged holiday in order to recover his health, and in the meantime they would carry on under the leadership of Sir George Foster as acting premier. Sir Robert, in order to prevent what looked like a complete break-up, reluctantly consented to this arrangement.

The prime minister is back from his holiday. He looks much better, with a fine southern tan. At times he shows much of his old-time vigor. But it is said by those who should know that his doctors have again advised him to retire from the active political arena, and this time he is determined to take their advice, no matter what the consequences.

Party's Future to be Discussed

There is thus good reason to state with considerable definiteness that a caucus will be called shortly before the house adjourns, when Sir Robert will place his retirement in the hands of his followers. Three things will have to be settled by this momentous caucus: (1) Whether the Unionist party is to be continued, and, if so, under what name; (2) what will be the policy of the party; and (3) who will be its leader.

Must Remain Unionists

The first decision will be the easiest. There seems little doubt that the party will be continued. The majority of the Liberal Unionists have so burned their bridges behind them that there is no return for them. They have either to remain with a reorganized Unionist party or efface themselves from the political map. As for the Conservative Unionists, a number of them, particularly from Ontario, are anxious to get back to old-time lines and would like to see every Liberal Unionist kicked bodily out of the party. However, the majority of them are prepared to accept a new deal, provided the policy and the leadership are satisfactory. Hon. Robert Rogers cannot summon more than a half dozen followers, if that many, in the commons.

Name and Platform

The question of a name will prove considerable of a stumbling-block. There is talk of the name "national party." However, it is feared that it would be linked up with the old nationalist party of Bourassa's making. Conservatives object strenuously to the dropping of the old name entirely out of deference to the small percentage of Liberal Unionists in the party. The best guess is that some such name as National Liberal Conservative party will be adopted.

As to the question of platform, there would seem to be little trouble. The foundation-stone of the party will be continuance of British connection, the building up a great autonomous nation within the empire. A stern face will be set against such elements in the Liberal party as are represented by Lindsay Crawford and John S. Ewart.

Moderate Tariff Policy

The tariff policy will be one of moderate protection. It was perhaps best stated by Sir Henry Drayton in his budget speech. This enunciation will be accepted as the party's tariff policy. He said:—

"Our policy calls for a thorough revision of the tariff with a view to the adoption of such reasonable measures as are necessary: (a) To assist in providing adequate revenue. (b) To stabilize legitimate industries and to encourage the establishment of new industries essential to the proper economic development of the nation to the end that a proper and ever-increasing field of useful and remunerative employment be available for the nation's workers. (c) To develop to the fullest extent our natural resources. (d) To specially promote trade with the mother country, the sister Dominions and colonies and the Crown dependencies. (e) To prevent the abuse of the tariff for the exploitation of the consumer; and (f) To safeguard the interests of the Canadian people in the existing world struggle for commercial and industrial supremacy.

The real sticking-point will be on the question of leadership. There is no one man upon which all are ready to unite. If Sir Thomas White had stayed in the cabinet he would have been an almost certain choice, upon whom Liberals and Conservatives could unite. He is now regarded as out of it. Hon. N. W. Rowell is the ablest of the Liberal Unionists, but he lacks personal magnetism and has collected too many enemies.