

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY

BY  
The Monetary Times  
Printing Company  
of Canada, Limited

Publishers also of  
"The Canadian Engineer"

# Monetary Times

Trade Review and Insurance Chronicle  
of Canada

Established 1867

Old as Confederation

JAS. J. SALMOND  
President and General Manager

A. E. JENNINGS  
Assistant General Manager

JOSEPH BLACK  
Secretary

W. A. MCKAGUE  
Editor

## Coming Session Has Many Problems

**Political Developments Anticipated—Union Party Must Have Solid Platform and Active Leadership to Survive—Direct Taxation, the Tariff and Labor Questions Are Among Subjects for Legislation**

(Special to *The Monetary Times*.)

Ottawa, February 19, 1920.

PARLIAMENT will open in another week under peculiar and interesting circumstances. The prime minister will be absent and in his place will be an acting premier without his authority; back of him will be a more or less divided and restless party. The government has been weakened since the last session by the loss of two of its strongest members, Hon. F. B. Carvell and General Mewburn, while there is good reason to believe that before the house opens there will be the announcement of the retirement of a third. The house is opening on a session which, from the standpoint of political excitement, has infinite possibilities. However, there is no use predicting what will happen. For the past three years political prognosticators at the opening of parliament have confidently announced that the government was on the point of dissolution and that it could not possibly last out the session. It has wound up each session possibly stronger than at the opening.

### Parliament Buildings Not Ready

Parliament will meet in the new buildings. Unless miracles are performed in the next week, the conditions will be far from comfortable or satisfactory. A small army of workmen are strenuously endeavoring to get a semblance of order and to smooth out the ragged edges of an uncompleted contractors' job, but at best the two chambers will meet amid the grime and dust and noise of work. It cannot be otherwise unless the contractors' cease all operations as long as the house is in session. It is candidly admitted now that a huge mistake was made in moving into the new building this session. It will be two years yet before the contractors and architects hand over a completed job to the government.

### Union Platform May be Presented

This session will, undoubtedly, see a final decision as to the future of the Union party, and as to the selection of a leader. Both Liberal and Conservative Unionists are demanding that some decision should be reached. It is realized that the present unsatisfactory conditions cannot long prevail. The first question to be settled is that of a platform. The great trouble with the government at present is that it has no policies. No one is sure just what it stands for, and a party as well as an individual without guiding principles, is steering for the rocks. It is understood that the cabinet has been working on a platform which may be submitted to an early caucus.

### Tariff May be Chief Issue

On most questions there will be little difficulty in reaching an agreement. The stumbling block, if any, will be the tariff. However, the majority of the cabinet and probably the majority of the government's parliamentary following,

are apparently prepared to unite on a policy of moderate protection, with a tariff revised after careful inquiry, upon scientific lines with a view to protecting our industries and raising revenues and yet not extending special privileges to any industries. Hon. Arthur Meighen has been making speeches along these lines, and while he was probably voicing only his own personal views at the time, as far as can be learned, it is about the opinion of the majority of the government. Such a policy will not satisfy extreme protectionists or some of the government's western following. The former will make a group of their own and the latter will probably be driven to join the cross-benches. If the platform is not acceptable to the government caucus, then disintegration will rapidly follow and the old Conservative party will be resurrected.

### Government Leader Also Uncertain

The platform approved, the next question will be that of leader and this is even more involved. Of course, until Sir Robert Borden actually retires, nothing can be done. It is rumoured that his resignation is all written out ready to be handed to the Governor-General if so desired. When he left Ottawa his health was such that not even his closest and best friends ever expected to see him in his office again. He is reported, however, to be much improved in health and if the cabinet and the party fail to agree on a leader and at present there is no Elisha in sight, he may remain at his post. Whatever happens, unless there is a real crisis, he will not be in Ottawa this session.

### Finance Minister's Policy

Interest of the session will, of course, centre around the budget speech, both from a political and business standpoint. It will be the first budget of Sir Henry Drayton and will be one of the most important in the history of the country. Sir Henry, from the time he took the portfolio, has taken the stand that the first essential was strict economy and that current expenditure and revenue must balance. Revenues for this past year have been buoyant and will run nearly \$350,000,000. The estimate for the coming year will not be less. This means that expenditures will have to be kept to this sum if there are not to be heavy borrowings. With fixed expenditures running to some hundred and fifty millions or more through interest, pensions, etc., it is no easy task to pare the expenditures down to this sum. Salary increases will run into millions, while the government service is constantly expanding. The estimates have been sent back a couple of times for revision and the ministers are still worrying with their officials on the subject.

It is intimated that there will be no drastic tariff changes this session. Until the party adopted some policy this is self-evident. Here will come the big tug of the session as the cross-benches led by Hon. T. A. Crerar are certain to call for a general revision downwards, while in view of the Liberal platform, Hon. Mackenzie King cannot sit quiet.