

THE DISLOYALTY CRY

So far as I can ascertain, this cry in the first instance appears to have been got up by certain hysterical old women of the male sex, chiefly resident in Toronto, apparently of the class who never retire to rest without first satisfying themselves that no Irish American Fenian, armed to the teeth, is lurking under their mattress with designs to cut their throats. Allow me to reassure these timorous souls (and to assure them) all that we purpose to do, all that if this agreement is carried into effect Canada will be doing is to do on a small scale what the British people and the British Government have been doing on a very much larger scale for 60 years or more. If this be treason, then assuredly Great Britain and the British people is the chosen home of treason.

A RE-INDORSED MANDATE

But these men are afflicted with constitutional scruples—they tell us that we have no mandate to act in this manner. Sir, this is a novel doctrine from Conservative lips that we must not act in any new and important matter without referring to the people at large. As for our mandate, we received it first by an overwhelming majority in 1896; that mandate was confirmed in 1900, again endorsed in 1904, re-endorsed in 1908, and unless I wholly misread the signs of the times, it will be still more strongly endorsed in 1911.

That mandate, sir, was of a two-fold character—it was to keep certain rogues out of power, and to govern Canada to the best of our ability. Later on I hope to show you that we have in a reasonable measure fulfilled our obligations in that regard.

But let us ask these gentlemen what mandate we possessed for assisting Great Britain in the Boer War, or what mandate Sir John Macdonald and his friends had for carrying out the act of Confederation itself. All important as it was, it was done without formal reference to the people of Canada. Sir, I judge these men by their own previous practices. Let us take the case of the admission of British Columbia in 1871. If ever a case occurred in which it would have been proper to submit a treaty of the sort for the consideration of the people, it was surely then. Nevertheless, though it was the last session of a moribund Parliament, in the face of all remonstrance, Sir John Macdonald forced it through the House, although his conduct on that occasion was so much disapproved of by many of his staunchest supporters, that whereas he had a normal majority of 70, the appeal to the people was refused by a bare majority composed of the members of his own cabinet, then sitting in the House.

NO CHANGE OF POLICY

And now, sir, they bring forward a still more amazing charge. They allege that the Liberal Government have changed their policy with respect to reciprocity. Sir, have these men no memory, or do they suppose that everyone else has lost theirs? What was the Liberal policy in 1888 when I myself brought forward a proposal for the fullest possible reciprocity between Canada and the United States, and on what issue did we fight the whole campaign of 1891?