

Government of Quebec (and now also the Government of Saskatchewan), respecting the prohibition by the Dominion Government of the issue of Provincial or Municipal securities without the consent of the Minister of Finance. He resented the assumption in some newspapers that the action of the Quebec Government was caused by a desire to embarrass the Federal authority. He claimed that the Quebec Government were doing everything that they could in the way of co-operation with the Dominion authorities, and he contended:

"What we want is unity of effort and co-operation. We are willing to help in the full measure of our resources, conducted with full knowledge of all the facts and circumstances, but all within our respective rights and constitutional authority."

"There is no controversy between the Canadian Government and ourselves as to the advisability of the control of borrowing. Credit should be saved as much as anything else. Conservation of credit is all essential. We have not only advised this since the beginning of the war, but, what is more, have practiced it, which accounts for the creditable statement that I have the honour of presenting to the House to-day."

We hope it is not too late to have such friendly communication between the Dominion and Provincial authorities as will enable them to come to a good understanding respecting the conservation of capital, rather than have a continuance of the controversy on the constitutional question.

Patronage

A PLANK in the election platform of the Union Government which was received with much favour by independent electors was the "abolition of patronage." Just what was comprised in this pledge of Sir Robert Borden may not be very precisely stated. Perhaps some definition of what is meant by political patronage is needed to enable the reader to know what is to be expected under the new order of things. What the public—or at all events the independent electors—have understood is that in the distribution of Government moneys, in the appointments to public office, in the awarding of contracts, all the people concerned shall stand on terms of equality, and merit only shall be considered. The giving of a preference to one's own political friends was not necessarily an evil. If capable and faithful men were chosen for office, whether they belonged to one party or the other was really of little consequence. The misfortune was that sometimes, in the desire to please friends, men were appointed who did not measure up to the proper standard of character and ability. Any effort the new Government may make to guard against such abuses and to transact business on the same terms as prevail among well-regulated private establishments should have the hearty support of the public.

Some of the Government's opponents, too ready, perhaps, to be suspicious, expressed doubts as to the sincerity of the promise to abolish patronage. Members of the Government who feel that such suspicion is unjust must be surprised to find evidence that among some of their own supporters that feature of Government policy is being treated as a political joke. At a point on the Welland

Canal there is a man holding a small position which, it appears, he obtained several years ago on the recommendation of the member of Parliament for the district. In the recent election the holder of the petty office took the liberty of voting against the member who had so recommended him, who was again a candidate. This would not strike the ordinary citizen as a crime at any time. Certainly it could not be regarded as a very grave offence in an election in which the abolition of patronage was made a prominent feature of Governmental policy. The member referred to, however, who was again elected, regarded the free exercise of the franchise by the office holder as an unpardonable offence, and forthwith boldly addressed a letter to him demanding his resignation and threatening, in event of refusal, to bring about his dismissal! That member of Parliament apparently had not taken seriously Sir Robert Borden's pledge to abolish patronage.

Down East also a somewhat similar disregard of it has been exhibited by a local Conservative journal. In the county of Lunenburg the Government candidate was a gentleman holding an office under the Militia Department, which he temporarily left, and to which, since his defeat, he has returned. His opponent was lucky enough to win the election by an unprecedentedly large majority. Thereupon the local Conservative newspaper, the Bulletin, made the following announcement:

"Lunenburg County will not be able to obtain a single concession or favor through Mr. Duff. He cannot get a stick of timber for a wharf, nor a dredge big enough to clean up a smelt brook. If he is permitted to take his seat he will be a non-entity and cannot 'throw cold water' on anything. Mr. Margeson, the Union candidate, will have the say in this County. The foolish ones who voted for Mr. Duff can think it over."

Evidently the conductors of that journal are not anxious to see patronage abolished.

The member of Parliament who threatens the Welland Canal employee with dismissal will not be able to carry out his threat, for it is not conceivable that under the circumstances Sir Robert Borden will permit the dismissal of the official. The entire abolition of patronage will, under the most favourable circumstances, be a difficult thing to accomplish. It is to be made more difficult by the fact, so clearly shown, that some of Sir Robert Borden's supporters have no desire for such a reform. It is to be hoped that the Premier will be able to devise means which will at least remove the abuses which were found under the patronage system, and such measures should receive the cordial support of the new Parliament.

Well Meant, but not Practicable

WITH a praiseworthy desire to bring about more satisfactory relations between Quebec and the English speaking Provinces the Quebec Chronicle proposes the appointment of a general commission of inquiry, to be composed of six members appointed by Sir Robert Borden and six by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, with Sir Charles Fitzpatrick, Chief Justice of Canada, as chairman. The men to be chosen, our contemporary proposes, shall

be equally divided as respects race, and representative of "law, religion and education." No active politician, no member of Parliament, no person who has been actively engaged in the controversies of recent times is to be appointed. The commission should "sit in the capital city of each Province successively, taking evidence and receiving complaints from representative organizations on which to base a finding that shall not be merely one of law, but of absolute equity." The Chronicle thinks there should be no reason why both Federal and Provincial Parliaments should be unwilling to "bind themselves to give force to the Commission's finding, without which the whole scheme would almost certainly fall to the ground without accomplishing anything."

Every sincere effort to produce happier relations between Quebec and the other Provinces—and our Quebec contemporary's proposal is certainly of that kind—is deserving of careful and sympathetic consideration. We fear, however, that the obstacles in the way of the success of the Commission scheme are insuperable. Is not the proposal to exclude members of Parliament and other politicians something like the method sometimes employed to obtain a jury in a difficult case, which results in the exclusion of the most qualified men? The idea that the Federal and Provincial Governments would in advance "bind themselves to give force to the Commission's finding" is one that is quite impossible of realization. The proposal to hold an inquiry in the capital of each Province implies that there is some trouble in each Province that requires investigation, and that is not the case. In most of the Provinces the relations between the English-speaking and French-speaking citizens, where both races are found, are happy and satisfactory. An inquiry in these Provinces would simply be an invitation to people to endeavour to find grievances where none exist. Apart from Ontario and Quebec—or perhaps we should include Manitoba, which apparently can be relied on at all times to produce a school question, big or little—there is throughout Canada a happy freedom from racial and religious controversies. Difficulties of that character in both Alberta and Saskatchewan were expected by some people a few years ago, but time has not justified their fears. The Provinces which are blessed with peace and harmony will have no desire to receive a Commission for the investigation of troubles where such do not exist. Apart from the regrettable bi-lingual school question in Ontario, what is there that could form the subject of a formal inquiry by Commission? The question of military conscription, so keenly discussed in recent months, is neither racial nor religious. It is one upon which people of all classes have differed. There is nothing in connection with it that can now be usefully investigated by a Commission. The law is in operation, the country has unmistakably approved of it. Before a Commission could get to work, the law will have served its purpose, and will no longer be a matter of debate.

No, the Quebec problem, as the situation is called, cannot be dealt with in that way. Neither a Federal Commission, nor resolutions in the Quebec Legislature or Montreal City Council, nor any other official procedure can serve good ends now. Better let the Quebec problem alone than attempt to solve it in such ways. Time, the great healer, must do most of the work of producing the better relations between French Canadians and English Canadians that all good citizens must desire.