

GENERAL REFORM ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO.

Retiring President Discusses Current Topics.

THE annual meeting of the General Reform Association of Ontario was held at Toronto, November 27. Delegates from all parts of the Province were in attendance and the proceedings evinced a spirit of optimism and buoyancy that left no doubt of the strength and virility of Liberalism in the province. Notable addresses were made by the retiring President, by Mr. N. W. Rowell, leader of the Provincial Opposition, Hon. George P. Graham, Mr. F. F. Pardee, Chief Liberal Whip in the House of Commons, and several others including the new President, Mr. A. J. Young of North Bay, whose election was unanimous.

In the course of his formal address as retiring President of the Association, Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King dealt with conditions in Canada since the outbreak of the War. After quoting from the August number of Canadian Liberal Monthly an outline of the attitude of the Liberal party of Canada in the "truce to party strife" preferred at the outbreak of the War by Sir Wilfrid Laurier on behalf of the Liberal party, Mr. King said, in part:

Vindication of Liberal Policies.

"If these words were true at the outbreak of the war in August last, events since have certainly helped to throw into relief, so far as Canada and the Mother Country are concerned, the wisdom and far-sighted statesmanship of policies calculated to materially further the friendly relations existing between the United States of America and the British Empire, and of policies which, with regard to all possible contingencies, seek to gain for consumers and producers alike, the widest markets in which to buy and sell. They have in an even more pointed way, disclosed the service to the British Empire in time of war, to say nothing of the sense of security and source of pride afforded thereby to its Dominions, of naval services owned and controlled on principles identical with those set forth in the unanimous resolution of the Parliament of Canada of March 1909, and embodied in the Canadian Naval Service Act passed by the Liberal Administration in 1910. They have revealed, too, especially to those who were strong in their denunciation of the Government at the time the great wisdom and patriotism of the Liberal policies with respect to Japan and Canadian Japanese relations, and with respect to relations with the Far East generally. Let us hope that out of the experience and sacrifices of this war will come hereafter more toleration and less bitterness between the political parties in Canada as respects each other's opinions on matters of domestic concern; and, as regards international relations and obligations, a larger vision and a broader humanitarianism on the part of Canadians generally.

Among many subjects that might be mentioned, there are at least three deserving of earnest

consideration in this connection. With respect to each it would seem that the leaders of the two political parties might, to the honour of Canada, and infinite credit to the parties they represent, join in a common accord.

Agreement as to the Absence of Party Conflict

The first is a frank, open and public avowal that until the war is ended, except as may be occasioned by constitutional requirements, no effort will be made to precipitate a party conflict in the Dominion, save on grounds of the highest public necessity. Financial, commercial and industrial conditions are at the moment sufficiently abnormal and strained to make it imperative that the uncertainties surrounding them should not be heightened by misgivings as to the probabilities and possibilities of political contests. Vital considerations of national and imperial significance demand that false impressions be not created abroad by a course of action that, save for party political considerations, can have no possible shadow of excuse.

It is not fear of the outcome of such a contest, but a sense of what patriotism demands, that prompts this suggestion.

The war, as respects Canadian politics, has relegated to the background for the time being, all questions other than those of meeting its obligations and aiding its prosecution to a successful and speedy termination. As to the justice of the cause of the allies, and the necessity of their ultimate victory in the interests of higher civilization and the liberties of mankind, there is but one opinion in Canada—but one opinion, it might be said, on this continent. How better could the prevailing sentiment have been expressed than in the words of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, at the opening of the special session of Parliament in August last, words which not alone epitomized the Liberal point of view, but, as the proceedings of that remarkable gathering disclosed, the single thought of the entire country as well. * * *

This being the attitude which, under Sir Wilfrid's leadership, Liberals expect their representatives in Parliament to maintain, it is well, perhaps, that men of all parties and men of no party in Canada should know that section 50 of the British North America Act provides:

"Every House of Commons shall continue for five years from the day of the return of the writs for choosing the House (subject to be sooner dissolved by the Governor-General, and no longer".

This being the language of the constitution, there is imposed on the Ministry by it, no necessity for a dissolution earlier than September, 1916. Surely we may hope that before that time the war in Europe will have run its course, and our minds be so at rest that a consideration worthy of their importance may be given domestic policies and problems,