

MR. MEIGHEN'S SPEECH.

Sir:—In your editorial of December 11 on Mr. Meighen, you say that in his Hamilton speech of 1925 he "advocated . . . that Canada should not enter war, even on the British side, except after a reference to popular vote." You add that "this was a negation of representative government".

The text of the Hamilton speech shows that what Mr. Meighen actually proposed was that, on the outbreak of war, the Government should make its decision, promptly, and act on it; but that before troops were sent overseas, the Government's decision should be submitted to the people at a general election.

Is this "a negation of representative government"? It is common ground among authorities on the Constitution that a general election is proper whenever there is a great new question of public policy at issue. A decision to send troops overseas, taken by a Government elected on purely peace-time issues, surely qualifies as a great new question of public policy. Mr. Baldwin, in 1923, dissolved a Parliament elected only a year before in order to seek a mandate for a protective tariff. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, in 1931, dissolved Parliament in order to get a "docket mandate" on fiscal policy. John A. Macdonald in 1891, and Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1911, dissolved Parliament to seek a mandate on the question of reciprocity. Were these actions "negations of representative government"? Mr. Meighen himself has told us that Sir Robert Borden's Government, in 1914, very seriously contemplated precisely the course of action suggested in the Hamilton speech. Would that have been "a negation of representative government"?

EUGENE FORSEY.

Piccadilly avenue,
Ottawa, Dec. 12, 1942.

EDITOR'S NOTE—Mr. Forsey apparently does not see the difference between a Prime Minister asking the people to tell him what to do or not do—which Mr. Meighen advocated—and dissolving Parliament to submit a declared policy by which the Government, could stand or fall, which was what Sir John Macdonald and Sir Wilfrid Laurier did.

MEIGHEN PAPERS, Series 6 (M.G. 26, I, Volume 222)

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