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Speeches-1922 - 1932

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1932.

Mr. King's Important Message to South Huron.

Rt. Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King addressed two great meetings yesterday in South Huron and made two speeches of national interest and significance. He paid the constituency the compliment of choosing it in which to expound Liberal policies of far-reaching importance, among them the creation of a central bank of discount, whereby control of credit could be exercised for the service of the people as a whole, with a lowering of interest rates; a tariff preference of 50 per cent. on Empire products imported through Canadian channels; the reduction of the Canadian tariff to the level of the Dunning budget; the restoration to Parliament of control over taxation by putting an end to customs valuation and regulation by administrative action and order-in-council; the immediate abolition of the three per cent. excise tax on all imports; the development of foreign markets by trade treaties or on the basis of Canada's intermediate tariff; the introduction of the alternative vote in single-member constituencies and of proportional representation in all cities having more than two members; the creation of a national commission to deal with unemployment on the lines of the Patriotic Fund of war time; and the collection of a body of information looking to the establishment of a contributory system of unemployment insurance. It is a positive.

Mr. King deplored the injection of the Imperial Conference agreement into the South Huron campaign, and rebuked the Government for dressing it up as a partisan issue. Mr. King would have kept silence on the subject, as he did scrupulously during the course of the Conference negotiations, if Dr. Manion had not deliberately dragged it into the constituency, though not a single South Huron elector has been informed of the Canadian tariff changes involved in the agreement itself. The Conservative leaders wished the electors to forget the Government's record during the past 48 months, and to avoid discussing what it intends to do in the future. Why, asked Mr. King, had the Government brought on the South Huron election before the contents of the Imperial Conference agreement had been made public, when by waiting a few days until the meeting of Parliament called for October 6 the electors would have the information before them. The Government could have deferred the by-election until December 9, but chose to bring it on prematurely, so that it could appeal to the constituency, not on the Imperial Conference agreement itself—for that is still a secret—but with a new set of promises to take the place of the old set offered two years ago. The Liberal leader reminded his audience that Imperial preferential trade was a Liberal policy, and was opposed at its inauguration by the Conservative party, which had resisted every increase in the margin of preference. The King Government had in 1929 arranged for an Imperial Conference in 1930, and in preparation for that Conference had framed the Dunning budget, which all parties in Britain enthusiastically acclaimed. But the Canadian electors in 1930 voted the Liberals out of office because of false hopes of an immediate revival of prosperity held out to them by the Conservative party. The first act of the Bennett Government was the destruction of the Dunning budget and the imposition of high tariffs on British goods, so that when the Imperial Economic Conference met in London two years ago and Mr. Bennett proposed, not to lower these barriers, but merely to raise Canadian duties on foreign imports, a British Cabinet Minister, Mr. Thomas, aptly described his attitude as "humbug."

The railway problem, like the Imperial Conference, has been thrust into the South Huron campaign by Dr. Manion—in each case before full official information and the data necessary to intelligent discussion, had been made available to the public. Mr. King lamented the singling out of the National Railways for special attack by the Government. The system had merely shared the fate of other common carriers in a period of depression, made worse in this country by trade restrictions and prohibitions. Many Canadians suspect that some influence is at work which has other objects than the good of the national system. The dismissal of officials and employees and the changes of certain C. N. R. passenger train schedules have been carried to unnecessary lengths, and there is a fear that the morale of the service is being undermined because no one feels secure and the employees are disheartened. A general feeling exists that the C. N. R. is being relegated to a subordinate or auxiliary position. Sir Henry Thornton in 1929 told the world that there had never been any politics in the administration of the road, but he says today that one of the crying needs is the elimination of political interference. Who, asks Mr. King, is responsible for the difference? As to the report of the Royal Commission on Transportation, the Liberal leader says his party will demand that the employees of the railway be given representation on any board charged with directing its affairs. That is fair notice given the Government before the opening of the session at which the Commission's report will be considered.