

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Election and by-election results during the past two years indicate a growing intolerance on the part of the public of official incompetence, vacillation, indecision, extravagance and graft. The government or the man who asks for the confidence of the people during these times must have more than organization and money to recommend him to the electorate. Clean hands and honest intent must supplement those. Progressive policies, and a vision beyond party advantage are looked for.

The Provincial government of British Columbia will make an appeal for the renewed confidence of the people of that Province in September next. What account can that government give of the stewardship entrusted to it for the past many years, and what has it to offer in justification of an appeal for renewed confidence on the part of the electors? It is for the electors themselves to judge. Already the public of the Province has expressed itself in disapproval of the government's record. The defeat of Hon. C. E. Tisdell in Vancouver, and of Hon. A. C. Flummerfelt in Vancouver in the recent by-elections by overwhelming majorities may be interpreted as the writing on the wall which spells "weighed and found wanting" for the government. It had been hoped in these campaigns that the retirement to self-created safety of Sir Richard McBride might atone for many of the past sins of the administration. But it was not to be. The anger of the people who remembered the splendid heritage of lands, forests and minerals which were theirs twelve years ago, and who now see them in the hands of speculators and exploiters, could not be turned aside by that vicarious sacrifice.

The fight now on in British Columbia between entrenched privilege, and those who desire good and clean government. No better indication of this can be found than the fact that **Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, life-long Conservative** came forth to do battle for the Liberal candidates during the by-elections above-mentioned. His reasons for doing so are summed up in the following stirring appeal addressed to the electors of Victoria on March 3rd last:

"I ask Conservatives to drive from power the government which has disgraced this Province, and which has been the servile tool of adventurers.

"I ask Conservatives to defeat every minister of the Bowser government who shows his head.

"The relative state of party representation in the legislature is disgraceful.

"There are mile posts on the trail of this corrupt combination. An Opposition had it existed on this floor of the House would long ago have exposed their iniquities.

"What about Sir Richard McBride, and the Judas Iscariot who sold him?

"Who is the little Kaiser who attempts to read out of the party Conservatives who have opinions of their own?

"The Attorney-General was solicitor for a rascally trust company which has brought ruin and destruction on many a home.

"An indescent attempt is being made to save the sinking ship of Bowser and Company, by bribing you with your own money."

British Columbia is rich in agricultural land, forests and minerals. And yet in a time of general prosperity British Columbia is not keeping pace

with the other provinces in that regard. It should be the policy of a government to develop its natural resources. The record of the McBride-Bowser administration indicates that a policy of exploiting, and not developing was pursued. There are 15,000,000 acres of good land in the Province and yet it is estimated that upwards of \$30,000,000 worth of food-stuffs were imported into the Province last year. Lands available to settlement have been sold to speculators who now hold them almost free of taxation. The forests have been exploited in the same manner, while the small mining man has no longer any opportunity in the Province. "The speculator must have his chance" Mr. Bowser is reported to have remarked in justification of this policy, if policy it may be called.

An improvident railway policy is laid at the door of the present administration which now seeks re-election. The financial responsibilities of the Province is approximately \$80,000,000, the annual interest charges being three and a half million or half the normal revenue of the Province. In 1911 the Province had a surplus of eight million dollars. Up to 1914 there was a surplus of \$720,000, an overdraft of \$320,000 and \$1,150,000 had been borrowed. Up to 1916 the Province had gone behind six million dollars, and in the last years it had been necessary to borrow about ten millions.

Deducting debts which represent reproductive services, and investments, the net debt of Saskatchewan is \$21.29 per head; of Alberta \$23.23 per head, and of British Columbia \$65.80.

"**This pilfering of your money and mine**" declared Sir Hibbert Tupper on Feb. 25th at Victoria, "**led to a rivalry between the two men, and I am bound to give Bowser his due; he outdid Sir Richard.**" And that seems to be the secret of the whole situation.

The government is by no means free from charges of graft, in addition to those of improvidence, extravagance and waste. "Sir Richard," declared Sir Hibbert speaking on the same occasion, "**allowed a rake-off, dealing with the Songhees Reserve, of \$75,000, and \$45,000 of the plunder disappeared. But this was only \$75,000, so the great William J. Bowser arose and pulled off \$80,000 on the Kitsilano Reserve sale.**"

Sir Richard McBride has retired to a ready-made position in which the people of British Columbia will continue to pay him \$15,000 a year. His successor Mr. Bowser claims again the confidence of the people for the administration. A bill has been drafted providing that the soldiers shall vote. And the somewhat striking feature of this bill is that it provides for the keeping open of the polls for six weeks. But it may be asked, what inducement has the government to offer to the soldiers under the policy so far pursued? The lands to which the returning men might look for homes are in the hands of speculators; the heritage has been exploited. "Where the offence lies, then let the axe fall."

"The country for the people" is the policy upon which the Liberal Party will oppose the Bowser administration at the coming elections.