

News from Ottawa

The Coming Session of Parliament—Will There Be a Redistribution Bill?

(By The Guide Correspondent.)

Ottawa, Nov. 8.—After the excitement attending the retirement from the government of Hon. F. D. Monk and the appointment of his successor there has been a temporary lull in the political world. There is always a quiet period at the capital just before the House opens. The ministers devote all the time possible to the framing of the sessional program and the strictest secrecy is usually maintained as to the various items which will make up the Speech from the Throne, at least there is secrecy as to the details, the program being always at least partially revealed by the progress of public events. Such legislation as is called for by the proposed temporary naval policy, the revision of the Bank Act and the sanctioning of the trade agreement with the West Indies has been indicated clearly for weeks and months. One should be able to say as much in regard to the Redistribution bill, which is always supposed to be passed as soon after the taking of the decennial census as possible. Up to the present moment, however, it has been quite impossible to get any authoritative statement as to what the government proposes to do. That is still an open question. That there is a desire on the part of some of the ministers to leave it over because the sessional program is too heavy there is no doubt. It would not be fair to say that back of this desire is a wish to have another general election before the West gets its full measure of representation. They believe, and no doubt honestly, that there is no possibility of the government going to the country for a couple of years, and that no harm would be done by letting the bill stand over. As there is back of the proposed delay no such sinister purpose, it behooves those who think that the bill should be passed so that the country can have an election at any time, to make themselves heard, if the Redistribution bill is not mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. A few determined members could serve notice that business would not be allowed to proceed until the government had given a promise to bring down a bill this session. Such a strike would produce the required promise within thirty-six hours. That such a course will be adopted there is little reason to doubt, and for that reason I would venture to predict that a bill will be brought down before the session is many months old. It is up to the Western members who are the most vitally concerned in the matter. If they are in earnest they can force the issue. The probabilities are, however, that between now and November 21, the government will see the point and will not be foolish enough to put such a good card in the hands of the opposition.

No Fight In Hochelaga

Sir Wilfrid Laurier's request of the Liberals of Hochelaga division of Montreal to allow Hon. Louis Coderre, secretary of state, to be elected by acclamation did not come as much of a surprise to those who watch the trend of political events closely. It would have been better, perhaps, for the Liberals if they had asked their leader for his opinion as soon as Mr. Coderre was named instead of announcing that he would be opposed. When difficulty was experienced in getting a candidate who was prepared to go up against a minister in a bye-election Sir Wilfrid's opinion was sought. His decision that there should be no contest is in keeping with his general conduct in declining to more than generalize when speaking of the navy question, until the government has submitted its policy to the country. He realized that without this pronouncement there was no real issue on the question which led to the retirement of Mr. Monk from the cabinet and that to fight a bye-election battle in Hochelaga under such circumstances was to court almost certain defeat. The ministerialists are rather disappointed than otherwise that there is not to be a contest, because they saw that an election held under the present circum-

stances would in a measure force the Liberals and the Nationalists into the same camp, at least temporarily, and that would be to their advantage in the English-speaking provinces. The Liberal leader doubtless fully realized this and decided not to give his opponents this advantage they were counting on. Once the navy proposals are produced the air will be cleared and the three parties will be free to advocate their respective policies.

Effect of U. S. Elections

The adherents of both political parties in government and political circles claim to be pleased with the result of the presidential election in the United States. Those who favor the policy of maintaining the Canadian tariff at the present, or a higher, level trot out the old argument that there was no necessity of a trade agreement with the United States because the Democrats will proceed to lower the American tariff walls, thereby giving Canadians access to the market to the south. The friends of reciprocity and wider markets generally are pleased because the Wilson win is a victory for the principle of tariff for revenue and a real tariff of that kind would mean a heavy cut in the present customs imposts. It means, they claim, that the United States with Wilson at the head of affairs will always stand ready to go in for an agreement for free trade in the natural products of the two countries, and that if Canadians do not want that sort of thing it is their own fault. The friends of a lower tariff and a wider market undoubtedly have the best of the argument, no matter how much comfort the protectionists may endeavor to extract out of the low tariff victory. They say, and there is sound logic back of their attitude, that no political party in the United States, no matter how friendly to Canada, is going to give us something for nothing, more particularly as we have rejected a friendly offer already made. As a matter of fact the shaving down of the United States general tariff would probably be of more benefit to the Canadian manufacturers than farmers, because on occasional items a new tariff might permit our manufacturers to seek a market in the United States; but that the American people would throw their market open to the produce of Canadian farms without a quid pro quo is not believed by anyone at the capital who has given serious thought to the matter. There are many however, who are disposed to believe that if the Borden government desires to live to a respectable age it will forget the arguments advanced during the campaign of 1911 and negotiate a fresh agreement with the United States. Such an agreement could no doubt include a number of new features which would save the face of those who hollered so loud about having truck with a nation from which we are now purchasing goods at the rate of one million dollars' worth a day.

The Cement Duty

There is much curiosity and not a little speculation as to what the minister of finance proposes to do with the cement duties at the approaching session of the House. When the duty was cut from fifty-two to twenty-six cents per barrel to relieve the Western famine the cement merger made such a noise about it that Hon. W. T. White produced figures to show that when the railway rates are taken into consideration, the industry has practically a seventy-five per cent. tariff wall around it. It was remarked at the time that the department had made out such a strong case against the cement makers that it would be impossible to justify a return to the old duties. As already announced the full duties are now being collected again. For the time being no particular harm is being done, as not much cement is being used in the winter. But if the minister of finance desires to adopt a policy at all consistent with the facts and figures produced in support of the temporary remission of

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duty he will provide for a permanent reduction of the cement tariff in his budget speech. This is undoubtedly a matter which should be strongly pressed upon the government by Western members, irrespective of politics, as soon as the session opens. They can find a complete and unanswerable case against the cement octopus in the statements

prepared by the department of finance, and if the argument is strongly pressed it is hard to see how the minister could refuse a permanent reduction in the duties. It is more than likely that he personally is convinced that the duties should be lower and that it would not require much urging to bring about the desired result.