

SUBJECT

NAME AND DATE OF NEWSPAPER

*The Chronicle-Telegraph April 1/30*

## MR. KING SELF-EXPOSED

Premier King seems to be going rapidly from bad to worse and, in fact, to have lost his head completely in a certain memorable utterance last week. Certainly he must be amazed, if not alarmed at the storm of indignation he has provoked throughout the country. It is true that dyed-in-the-wool Liberal organs are not only excusing but even justifying what disinterested observers condemn as an outrageous declaration: thus we find the Moncton Transcript expressing itself in these terms:

Premier Mackenzie King appears to have become tired of the efforts of Conservative Provincial Governments to trap the Federal Administration into expenditures for which the political opponents of his party immediately would claim credit, as they have in the past. His declaration that there is in Canada no unemployment situation sufficient to demand Federal intervention is sufficient explanation of his refusal to relieve Provincial Governments of burdens which, under the constitution, are theirs to carry.

"The Federal Government has been exceedingly considerate of the claims of the various Provinces, despite the political complexion of the local Governments, evidence of which will readily be found in the Maritime Provinces, in increased Federal subsidies, in the twenty per cent reduction in freight rates, in payments in lieu of C.N.R. taxes, and recently in taking off our hands the Valley Railway, the white elephant which was left to the Province by an earlier Conservative Administration.

"Having established the fairness of the Federal Government to the Provinces, regardless of which party happens to be in office in the local Capitals, it is not surprising that Premier King should lose patience when his opponents should try to make political capital out of the unemployment situation"

On the other hand, the following, from the Hamilton Spectator, can be taken as typical of the reaction of moderate newspapers of Conservative views:

"However one looks at Premier King's utterance in the Federal House yesterday, regarding unemployment relief, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that he was guilty of an amazing indiscretion. Frankness may be a virtue, but such a bald-faced avowal of partisanship in a matter which so closely affects the national well-being is extremely disconcerting. The tactics adopted by Government speakers in the treatment of this problem have not been of a kind to invite approval, they have been dilatory and ineffective, and now the Premier himself has brought about the climax

with his declaration that "not a single cent to any Tory Government on earth" will be given by the Dominion by way of assistance for the unemployed, though he 'would be prepared to go a certain length, possibly, in meeting one or two Western Provinces that have Progressive Premiers at the head of their Governments." Such a statement would be sensational at any time, but just now, when election rumors are rife, it is staggering. When all allowance has been made for a natural feeling of irritation on the part of the head of the Government, over the prolonged bickering to which his party has been subjected, there can be no excuse for the attitude taken up. Open resentment, unfair discrimination against the greater part of the country, merely because of a difference in political sentiment, is not to be tolerated, and it is no wonder that it has evoked indignant protests from Opposition speakers and consternation in the ranks of Government supporters."

For our own part, we consider that Premier King was entitled to take the stand—if he chose—that the unemployment situation was not such as to warrant Federal intervention and that he refused to be coerced into relieving Provincial Administrations of their constitutional responsibilities. Had he stopped there, his stand might have been controverted but it could not be taken exception to on the ground of impropriety. For his added statement that he would not give a five cent piece to help unemployment in any Province directed by a Conservative Government, excuse can perhaps be found in momentary irritation but no justification whatever.

Again, even if Premier King's novel policy is proper, we still insist that it is bad politics because calculated to harden opposition to his own Administration in five Provinces out of nine and to alienate moderate opinions generally. In the past six years the Premier has gained some reputation for astuteness which we suspect, now more than ever, to be unearned. In our opinion, Mr. King's past successes have been due to the shrewd advice of his Quebec lieutenants, whom today he is cold-shouldering and disregarding in order to woo new friends in the West. And so, endeavoring to stand on his own judgement or to be guided by other counsels, he is beginning to emerge as a clumsy and spiteful blunderer, instead of the modern Machiavelli of the legend with which he was beginning to be surrounded. It is all very sad!

W. L. Mackenzie King Papers

Speeches-1922 - 1932

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