

JUSTICE TO PREMIER BORDEN

By tradition and feeling I am all with any political party that will work for the progressive betterment of the community as a whole. But I cannot see any radical difference in policy between the Conservatives and the Liberals in Canada. There was a possibility once that the parties might divide on the policy of trade, that the Liberals might come out plainly for Free Trade, but that possibility died with Sir Richard Cartwright. To such an observer as myself, there seems to be no plain line between the two parties except that one is Out and the other In. If the Liberals would come out with a really Liberal programme, such as Atkinson outlined some time ago, there would be some possibility of reality in the shamfight we call politics. The fact is that the conditions dictate to Canada one policy, whoever is in power.

Moreover, I read, for choice, the local Liberal newspaper. It is clean, well-edited and contains the minimum of American "boiler-plate." The editor is a dear good chap; but I think he believes in his heart of hearts that all Canadians are as sharply divided into two classes as the sheep and the goats in the Last Judgment. All the good are Liberals, and all the bad are Tories. In the days of the first Reform Bill, an inquiring child in a Whig family hearing politics always discussed, and the depravity of the Tories always denounced, asked his mother, "Are the Tories born bad, or do they just grow bad?" for children are naturally fond of theology. "My dear, all Tories are born bad, and grow worse," was the answer. And that is the mental attitude of the partizan editor. Change the names and you have dear good chaps all over Canada, maintaining openly in print and honestly believing that all the good men are on "our side," and all the bad men on the other. Talk about the narrowness and absurdity of theological creeds! No minister or priest in the world is asked to subscribe to anything so narrow and so manifestly opposed to plain facts, as the political creed of the partizan editor.

Now, reading this clean, well-edited paper every morning with my breakfast would drive me into the Tory camp, if I did not put on the brakes, by reading the utterances on the other side. I have no patience with this villipending of our politicians on both sides of the House. "Every country has the government it deserves." And if our politicians are feeble, corrupt, narrow-minded, the fault is mine, dear reader, and yours. If patronage is an evil, we voters are responsible, who shut our eyes to it, or, peradventure, profit by it. Let us give over abusing the men we have chosen to manage the affairs of state, if only for its utter futility, and for shame.

NOW, in regard to the present situation, I believe that Canada is fortunate in having at the present time Borden and Laurier as leaders of the two historic parties. In Halifax we know the Premier well. He has gone out and in among us for years. We knew him as plain Mr. Borden, the rising young lawyer, long before he became a figure of national importance. And we know nothing but good of him. Nor has there ever been a breath of suspicion on the personal integrity and honour of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Let us clear our minds of cant. Both are in the strict sense of the term, good men. No one will venture to assert that neither has ever made a mistake. Let us try to render them simple justice.

I was at Ottawa in the heart-shaking days of August, 1914, and it was my privilege to be in the Press Gallery at the opening of the Khaki Parliament, and to hear the two leaders on the great theme of the nation at war. Sir Wilfrid easily bore off the honours in oratory. It was a great occasion and he rose to it. He was generous, patriotic and wise. He promised the undivided support of his party in the hour of national trial. Canadians had but one heart and mind; they were with the Allies in their struggle for right. "We are British subjects," he said; "we have enjoyed the privileges of citizenship, now we are prepared to pay the penalties." This was not an ordinary war; it was a struggle of freedom against

By A. MacMECHAN

A HALIFAX view of the Premier who lives in Halifax when he is at home, written by a man who regularly reads a Liberal newspaper and politically, if he is anything you can label at all, is a Socialist. Only a man who would buy a vote from an archangel can read into this appreciation of a distinguished public citizen any symptom of party politics.

barbarism. So clearly did Sir Wilfrid grasp the great issues on August, 1914. I remembered that he once said that perhaps the last gun fired in defence of British connection in Canada would be fired by a French-Canadian.

Sir Robert followed. He is no orator; but he spoke in plain, straight man-fashion of the great crisis. The climax of his speech was a solemn warning of the dark days to come, "when our endurance will be tried." That was a true word. Our endurance has been tried, and it will be tried still further. I think every one who heard those two speeches felt that Canada had reason to be proud of having two such guides through the lowering storm of war.

Now let us forget the present bickerings, the injustice, the men "belied in the hubbub of lies" and look at the outstanding facts. Let the administration of Sir Robert Borden be judged by what it has accomplished, as it will be by the future Macaulays of Canada. In 1898 the United States had a short war with Spain and mobilized an expeditionary force, ultimately, of 8,000 men at Tampa, to throw into Cuba. In 1914, Canada (if I may not write the Borden Government) mobilized, equipped and despatched overseas a force of 30,000 men in three months, with much less delay, confusion and friction. That feat is no slight one and must be put down to the credit of the present administration. To have put into the field four divisions and have kept them up to strength, to have cared for the soldiers' dependents, the wounded, the sick, the returned men as has been done would be a credit to any community of eight millions in the world. Let us be just. To speak of such a record as "a tragic failure," while obstructing, carping and holding back, is simple misuse of language. Let us remember that this is our first real war. The Americans had the experience of their Civil War behind them.

Borden is denounced as "weak." He brought the

strongest man in his cabinet to book. Sir Sam Hughes is like Daniel Webster, a steam-engine in breeches. His energy made Valcartier possible; but he is an arrogant, self-willed man, and he forgot the duty of a cabinet minister. In the encounter of wills, Borden won.

Sir Sam Hughes has the defects of his qualities. He is a narrow and bitter partizan. Now, that he is out of power, his opponents are beginning to do justice to his superhuman energy. When he was in power, he was denounced for "bungling" by the same critic who points out that since his going, recruiting has dropped almost to zero. It is a matter of common belief that he favoured his own side in military appointments, a simple extension of the vile custom of patronage, by which a naval officer may not buy the gear for his ship where it is best and cheapest, but must buy it from a Tory dealer.

"You're another!" is the small boy's argument; but does anyone think for a moment that the patronage system would come to an end if the Liberals were returned this year? The fault does not lie with either set of M.P.'s; it lies with the people of Canada as a whole. If we really disapproved of the patronage system, it would disappear overnight.

THE latest achievement of the Borden Government is the passing of the Compulsory Service Act. In doing so, Canada was simply following in the wake of Australia, England and the United States. The Compulsory Service Act was necessary. The Premier went to England (at no slight personal risk) to represent Canada in the great war council of the British peoples. What he learned there made him see that compulsory service was imperative. And he has made it law. In all the outcry and criticism, was there any effective alternative suggested? There was talk of "educating opinion," of being in too great a hurry; but while Ottawa discussed methods of extinguishing the fire, the house was burning down. Now that Compulsory Service is the law, the Leader of the Opposition says, "We must obey the law." He is a Whig. There was factious, foolish, and ignorant opposition to the Bill. Its provisions are large-minded and generous. A thousand tribunals, made up of both parties will apply those provisions with plain Canadian common sense. The tumult and the shouting will die down; and sane men will say it was the only thing to do. What else was there to be done?

Sir Wilfrid Laurier should have the sympathy of thoughtful men. He has been placed in a most difficult position. I believe he was thoroughly sincere in August, 1914, when he promised the undivided support of his party in the crisis. He promised more than he could fulfil. He could not carry Quebec, his own province, with him. There the trouble simply is, the people do not know. To support Compulsory Service openly, to assist in forming a union cabinet would be to throw the French province into the hands of Bourassa. Now all the Whig in him says, "Obey the law." I believe the law will be obeyed even in Quebec.

THE stock example of a government being "a tragic failure" in a crisis is the British Government in the Crimea. It put 25,000 men into the field, practically in what they stood up in. It left them in a Russian winter without greatcoats; it served out green coffee to them; it sent boots all for one foot. It left the sick to rot in hospitals at Scutari. Two or three thousand got their death in battle. The rest died of mismanagement and preventable diseases until Russell exposed the muddle in The Times, and Florence Nightingale began to redeem the infamy of Scutari. That was "tragic failure," if you like. But think of the way our four hundred thousands have been equipped and cared for. Listen to what the Americans—Mr. Roosevelt for instance—says of Canada's bearing in the war.

Much has been said of "conscription of wealth." I don't know what this means, unless to hold a pistol

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