

AN ELECTION DEFERRED

Conservative Press Reflects Public Opinion on attempt to Force a "Khaki" Contest

A general election in Canada in the near future seemed in the early part of October to be not only a possibility but a very great probability. It was discussed in the press at great length, and one of the features of this discussion was the decided stand against an election taken by a number of the Conservative journals which are usually ready to support and applaud any action of the Government.

It is now generally admitted that the final decision against an election at this time was forced upon the Government by an overwhelming demonstration of public opinion against it, particularly from the business interests of the country. This opposition was altogether separate and apart from that which developed among leading Conservatives and Conservative journals who took the ground that not only was there no possible necessity for plunging the country into the turmoil of a general election, but that such an action on the part of the Government would be a gross treachery to the party truce deliberately declared and accepted at the outset of the War, so that Canada might be a unit in meeting the greatest danger that has ever confronted the Empire.

Late in the month, when public opinion began to make itself felt in so unmistakable a fashion that it was realized that an election at the moment was out of the question, a section of the Conservative press raised the ingenious cry that there never had been any intention at all to bring on an election and that all the talk of the month had been on the part of the Liberals, who were declared to fear an appeal to the people. The absurdity of this argument may be judged by the fact that as late as October 16, such staunchly Conservative organs as the *Winnipeg Telegram* printed Ottawa despatches stating "There is still a conflict of opinion. Members of the Cabinet either decline to discuss the matter or intimate that no definite decision has been arrived at".

That the efforts of that section of the Government which had fought so hard for an election had by no means ceased, even after the decision against an election had been informally announced on October 18, was shown when the *Montreal Star*, which had first argued editorially against an election on October 15, returned to the attack on October 22.

Herewith are quoted some of the editorials of leading Conservative journals that opposed an election at this crisis in the affairs of the nation:

Ottawa Journal, (Conservative)—

A New York paper, the *Wall Street Journal*, published an article on the Canadian political situation which alleges a probability of an early general election in this country. The reason stated is that the Borden government has not felt free to do all it wants for Britain in the present war, on account

of Liberal lukewarmness, and that a general election will clear the air. No allegation of this kind would be made in Canada. Parliament, in its war session, both sides alike, gave the government an absolutely free hand; and in speeches since that, Sir Wilfrid Laurier has urged the most vigorous Canadian action as a high patriotic duty. Unless some special cause arose, a political contest in Canada before something pretty decisive happened in the war in favor of the British cause would be very unfortunate, even though under normal circumstances an election this fall would have been likely enough.

Montreal Star, (Conservative), October 15,

The rumours which have been set afloat that a federal general election might be precipitated at this time, are surely to be deprecated. We do not believe for a moment that the Government have any such intention in mind. The whole nation is today acting under a party truce, reached deliberately and with patriotic unanimity in order that Canadians might move as a unit against by far the most menacing danger which has ever threatened our country or our Empire.

A general election could not be called now without causing a fierce renewal of party strife—without dividing our people into two hostile camps—without leaving the Liberals under a bitter sense of betrayal, after having been led into the "ambush" of patriotic co-operation. It would be like approaching a foe with a flag of truce and then opening fire on them. As we have said, we have not the slightest notion that the Government entertain any such treacherous intention.

Montreal Star.—October 22

Rumors still persist that there are forces—for which the government cannot be held responsible, that press for a dissolution of parliament at this time. Such forces cannot have measured the full effect of their proposal. What they urge is the violation of a flag of truce. Both political parties had their plans made for a platform campaign this autumn; and both immediately abandoned them when the nation found itself under foreign fire.

Canada's preparations to take part in the war have been conducted under a tacit agreement between the parties to "cease firing" on each other and to unite in concentrating the heaviest possible "fire" upon the German enemy. As in Britain, the Opposition have stacked their arms, and publicly pledged themselves to extend full confidence, without either cavil or criticism, to the government of the day. They have done this, practically, on