

and to a few friends who have given them assistance from time to time. For far too long, far too much has rested on the shoulders of far too few. Mr. Fogo, I know, will be the first to tell you that the National Liberal Federation is wholly inadequate to cope with what is expected of it. As the Party's future is dependent in so great measure on its organization, I feel that the actual position should be known to the Party, and its members be given an opportunity, before it is too late, to make the necessary provision for this important branch of its work.

### 30TH YEAR IN LEADERSHIP

Now a word as to the Party leadership. As you will recall, I was chosen Leader of our Party at the Convention held in this city, in August 1919, and have enjoyed this position ever since. Should I be spared, and continue to command the confidence of my fellow-Liberals, to a corresponding date in the present year, I will then have entered upon my 30th year in the leadership of the Party. For very obvious reasons, I have for some time past been asking myself if the time had not arrived when the Party should be afforded an opportunity of choosing a new leader.

As you well know, I have not concealed my desire to be allowed to retire from active politics, just as soon as the Party's interests and the country's would seem to justify that step.

You will recall that, after the first Great War, Sir Robert Borden, who had been Prime Minister throughout the years of war, and Sir Wilfrid Laurier who had led the Opposition in those years, both felt that they should ask their followers to relieve them of continuing to carry the responsibilities and duties of leadership of their respective Parties. Though not stated at the time, this was one of the objects which Sir Wilfrid had in view when, in 1918, he issued the call for a convention in the following year. On more than one occasion, he so stated this intention to myself and others. Unhappily, Sir Wilfrid's life came to its close before the Convention, over which he had hoped to preside, assembled.

Sir Robert Borden, whose years in office and in the leadership of his Party, had been much fewer than those of Sir Wilfrid, felt it necessary to resign both as leader of his Party, and as Prime Minister, within less than two years of the Armistice which terminated hostilities.

The second World War lasted two years longer, and was on a scale much vaster, than the first World War. Had the war against Germany and the war against Japan been brought to a close before the date for the general elections of 1945 had been fixed, and had time permitted the choice of a new leader for that campaign, I would not have hesitated to have told the Party at that time, that, my years of life and of office being what they then were, I felt my task had been completed, and that in the interests of all concerned the responsibilities

of Party leadership should be entrusted to another. Well, it is now over two and a half years since the last general elections. Should I be spared to lead the Party for another six months, three years will have elapsed since the end of the second World War.

Knowing something of what the six years of war, and the years of uncertainty immediately preceding, had involved of stress and strain, and knowing as well the demands political campaigns make on one's energies and strength, I stated at the commencement of the last general election, and repeated at different times in the course of the campaign, that, come what may, the general election of 1945 would be the last general election in which I would lead the Party.

### SOUGHT TO BE FRANK

I have, as you know, for the same reason, made similar statements from time to time, both to our own Party organizations, and in public. I should not like now to be accused of never having meant what I said: to have said what I said for what might be termed party political reasons. These are not the kind of tactics, I had ever resorted to in the course of my public life; nor are they the means by which I have come to enjoy the trust which the Party still holds in me as its Leader. I have sought to be perfectly frank in what I have had to say to the party and to the public. I have also tried, at all times, to look ahead.

The one thing which I would dislike more than anything else, after the years I have had of Party leadership and of office, is that I could ever be accused of having held on to the position of leadership to what might be termed "the last moment", and then, whatever the circumstances might be, to have it said that I had "let the Party down", so to speak, because of not having let the Party know, sufficiently in advance, of any fears I might have entertained of finding myself unequal to the tasks of leadership in a nationwide political campaign.

I need scarcely say that my decision to ask for the calling of a convention for the purposes I have mentioned is not a recent decision, suddenly reached in the light of any new situation which has arisen either in Canada or in any part of the world. Much less is it a decision based on any change of attitude toward myself on the part of my colleagues in the government, the Liberal members of the two Houses of Parliament, or the Party throughout the country. It is true, I believe, that while I have very great reason to congratulate myself upon having had the unbroken support and confidence of all these constituent elements of the Party, ever since I was chosen leader in 1919, I have never enjoyed that confidence in fuller measure than I do today. This is a reward of years of public service which nothing else can equal.

I must confess that, over the two and a half years since the last general elections, I have continued to enjoy powers of endurance

which, at many times in the past, I had not felt I had a right to expect. That I enjoy the measure of health I have at the moment is, I recognize, due in no small measure to the consideration shown my years by my colleagues in the Cabinet, and by my fellow Members in Parliament, and I think, I should add, by the Canadian public. This, however, is a consideration which, in the Party's interests, and in the public interest, I have no right to expect to have shown indefinitely. At the end of the last session of Parliament I saw only too clearly that I should not continue to delay in the calling of a convention, and so informed my colleagues in the Cabinet.

The life of a Parliament is five years. Assuming that a general election were not to take place before the expiration of the life of the present Parliament, that would leave to a newly appointed leader but two years before he would have to undertake a nation-wide campaign. In some respects, that is a short enough time. It is, however, by no means certain that the government would wish to wait until the expiration of the life of the Parliament before seeking a renewed expression of the people's confidence. It has seemed to me, therefore, that the selection of a new leader of our Party should not be further delayed.

I should like to see the new leader of our Party chosen, as I, myself, was chosen at a National Convention by representative members of the Party throughout the country, as well as by its representatives in Parliament.

The planning and arrangements of a National Convention are not something easily brought about. In a country the size of ours, it requires a certain amount of time. Knowing this, and feeling that the date of the Convention should be definitely fixed before we entered upon another session of Parliament, I wrote a letter to each of my colleagues, in July last, informing them that I was anxious to have matters of importance to the Party considered at special meetings of the members of the Cabinet to be held early in September. When the September meetings were held, I again informed my colleagues of my intention not to lead the Party in another general election, and said that I thought a National Convention should be arranged for forthwith. It was then decided to ask the Advisory Council of the Federation, at its next meeting, to assume this undertaking.

I hope I may not be placing too heavy a burden upon the shoulders of our very willing President, Mr. Fogo, and the members of his able executive, if I now venture to ask them to assume responsibility for the calling of a Convention, and for making the necessary arrangements for its proceedings. They will have, in this task, the assistance of members of the government, and of the Party in both Houses of Parliament, and also, I am sure, of provincial and local party organizations and leaders in the several provinces. Fortunately, as a guide, they will have, as well, the carefully prepared and preserved record of the proceedings of the two previous nation-wide

Liberal Conventions - that of the Dominion Liberal Convention held in Ottawa in June 1893, and which preceded the return of the Liberal Party to power in the memorable victory of 1896, and that of the National Liberal Convention of 1919, also held in this city, and which preceded the return to power of the Liberal Administration in the victory, no less memorable, of 1921.

### SUMMER CONVENTION HOPED

I hope, Mr. Fogo, that before its meetings are over, you will be able to give the assurance that the Advisory Council of the National Liberal Federation is prepared to assume this most important task, and that we may all look forward to the third nation-wide Convention of the Liberal Party in Canada being held in the summer of the present year.

I need not tell you, Ladies and Gentlemen, that it is with mixed feelings, indeed, that I make the request of the National Federation which I am making tonight. It is now nearly 40 years since I first became a member of the Parliament of Canada, and 39 years since I first sat in the Council Chamber as a Minister of the Crown. For an even longer time, my life has been given over mostly to public affairs. It has been all but exclusively devoted to the party and to Parliament ever since I became the Party's leader.

I do not look lightly upon the possible severance of relationships which have made up so large a part of my life. I wish I could feel it were in the interests of the Party not to contemplate that severance, but just to hold on, taking chances on what the future might bring to pass. That, however, would, I know, in the end, be a mistake. Were I twenty years younger - were I ten years younger - I should greatly prize the opportunity to continue in a position of leadership in times like the present, where issues as vital as any the world has faced are being discussed and decided. I cannot forget, however, that man's allotted time is three score years and ten, and that I am now in my 74th year. It seems to me, therefore, imperative that the Party should have at least the opportunity to consider what in its own interests may be for the best; and that, as its leader, I should not be responsible for longer withholding that opportunity.

I am far from believing that such service as I may be able to render in promoting Liberal principles and policies, and of service to our country in other ways, would not be all the greater were I afforded more in the way of time for reflection than is possible as the leader of a political party. There are, too, a few things I should still like to do, and to enjoy, before my day of life is over, if, in God's Providence, I should still be permitted the necessary health and strength. May I mention only one of these:

Speaking at a dinner given by Members of Parliament, a year or two ago, I chanced to remark it was a great pity that neither Sir John A. Macdonald, nor Sir Wilfrid Laurier had