

## RT. HON. ARTHUR MEIGHEN AT THE CONSERVATIVE CLUB

Last Saturday evening an informal reception took place at the Conservative Club Rooms, when the Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen gave an address briefly touching upon Conservative principles and the government's record.

The rooms were crowded to excess, and a number of people were unable to pay their respects to the leader of the Conservative party. The President, Major W. W. Kennedy, on behalf of the members, cordially welcomed Mr. Meighen, expressing in felicitous terms the pleasure his visit afforded them and explained that there would be no speech-making beyond the address that they would hear from their honored leader.

Upon rising, Mr. Meighen was accorded a tremendous reception, and after expressing his pleasure in meeting them for the first time in their home, said:

"I feel it is a signal honor to be so cordially welcomed, and find it is particularly pleasant to see so many faces of students I remember as far back as 25 years, and whose swords had flashed in many a contest. I am visiting the West on business of a personal nature, and had intended postponing public appearance politically until a later date. But as I am here, I would like to mention that whilst in Saskatchewan I found that Conservatives were more numerous than some people would have us believe. I do not intend trespassing upon your time and patience by a lengthy address, but will take the opportunity of reviewing as briefly as possible some of the doings of the King regime during the past two years.

"But first let me say that the standards of the party are inevitably bound up with the faith, the permanent faith in British connection, and all that it means. Conservatism was the history of this country, and its basic faith was the permanency of the Empire. It was not a mere form of words, but something real and vital in our national life, and British connection in the Conservative book represented a force striving to influence all that was useful and great within the Empire; also for the world. Every association within the Empire which has stood for honorable purpose, has been part and parcel of the party's principles since the time that Conservatism has existed in Canada as I am sure the records prove.

"As far as home issues are concerned, I am convinced that it is absolutely necessary on the part of any administration guiding the country's destiny to revive the application of the principles of past generations in politics to-day. But Liberalism to-day in Canada, means anything that will meet the immediate occasion. If I were asked to define the present principles of Liberalism as expounded by the King government, I would say that it was one thing, and one thing only, 'Keeping inside the Grit coral.' (Applause and laughter.)

"Which party is most constructive? Is it the Conservatives with the Canadian Pacific, founded by them, which bound by steel, instead of parchment, the furthestmost points of the Dominion; or the Liberal party with the millstone of the Transcontinental of 20 years ago, which will hang around the necks of generations to come, and which was the chief cause from which Canada federally suffers.

"Criticism has been directed to remarks I made here in this city reaffirming my belief that protection was the pivot of our national policy, and that trifling with it was responsible for the ills of the present day. I am charged with making the doctrine of protection subservient to other issues of greater consequence. I admit that I am keeping the tariff problem prominently in view. I am convinced that the right decision on this point means more to this country than all the others combined.

"Of these two great basic questions: That of British relations, and the matter of national policy the Conservative party had built its house. On many occasions it had unflinchingly met difficulties of administration with the same courage and vision that had animated statesmen of the past who had laid these principles down. (Applause.)

"The King administration have not courageously dealt with one public issue. One after another the great questions affecting the nation have been postponed. They have shirked the problems which beset the nation. Those who talk of constructive policy should look back a few years, and they would find that the Conservative party had had a consistent history. It had been mainly responsible for the birth of the Dominion of Canada. Its leaders had been the fathers of the country.

"We have been severely criticized with reference to our taking over the railways now, recognized as the national railways, but the amalgama-

tion of those lines saved the nation millions of dollars. I ask you what other course we could have adopted? The government were loaning large sums to two of the lines, one a veritable millstone about its neck, and the Canadian Northern was in such straits that only government aid could save them. Were the government to be periodically drained to carry them on and add up an unredeemable indebtedness? We took them over and created a Railway Board that creditably performed a thorough reconstruction of the lines, and brought them out of a chaotic condition into something like a coordinate mass. Then in came the Liberals and ruthlessly displaced them, substituting a board comprised of Liberal politicians. The Conservatives had selected men of experience and undoubted shrewdness, but the present board had nothing to recommend it.

"We have been charged with extravagance and mismanagement of the war, but the present government has done nothing to uncover one single instance to substantiate. The charges made relative to the Ross rifle as an inefficient weapon imposed upon Canadian soldiers. The whole contract was imposed on us by a party which was not a Conservative party. We were bound by the contract and Canada had only one factory where rifles could be manufactured. It would have taken a year or more for that factory to have substituted machinery to turn out the Lee-Enfield or other efficient type of rifle. The British government was appealed to for a supply of Lee-Enfields, but the demand for her own army was so tremendous that she could not aid us for some time. But at the earliest possible date the Lee-Enfield was supplied our soldiers.

"Ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you that the war government's expenditure during those years was less than that of the present government in times of peace. Since the termination of the war Great Britain had paid several hundreds of millions of pounds on her national debt. The United States had reduced hers by two billion dollars. Canada, however, was becoming more heavily indebted. For the first two years of its office the government had taken care of a deficit in the National Railways by borrowings from the national treasury. Mr. King claimed that he had a surplus of \$23,000,000, but the statement was not only misleading but dishonest. Instead of loaning \$90,000,000 or more to the National Railways, the government had loaned \$23,000,000, and then had the railway borrow the rest. Knowing that the country would have to pay it in any event, as the government of course had to guarantee the obligation. But in their computation they had not counted the amount as a liability. The whole process was not only deceiving the people of Canada, but shaming them.

"The King government also temporized on the lake freight issue with humiliating and unfortunate results. They appointed a commission to investigate the freight rates, and on its findings had rushed through a bill, the Lake Shipping Act, with a clause in it that barred the United States shippers from carrying Canadian grain, and then when they realized the tremendous loss to the grain growers and merchants, instead of amending the act, sent the Board of Grain Commissioners to the United States shipowners with the humiliating proposition that they could break the law and would be indemnified. Up to last October twenty shippers in Canada had paid in excess freight rates \$3,300,000 over and above what their competitors had to pay who were able to get American boats. The government's neglect to effectively regulate Canadian lake shipping rates has cost the farmers of western Canada many millions of dollars on the transportation of their last year's crop.

"There is another matter to which I must draw your attention. That is the promise of the King government to create a wheat board. Oh, yes, they kept their promise, but in passing that piece of legislation they have strings to it, making it absolutely unworkable. They failed to obtain a chairman to assume the responsibility, even from among their Progressive adherents. I don't see how in the face of the many betrayals of the government that the farmers can support the government. Their failure to provide a wheat board; to safeguard grain handling and transportation over the lakes, and to grant the necessary funds for the completion of the Hudson Bay Railway, formed a pretty heavy indictment against the government by the western farmer.

"I will not inflict upon you a more extensive criticism of the government. I have brought no new shibboleth nor policy, just a new application to that which stood the test of

our fathers, a revived application, if you will, of protection. I found in Saskatchewan the Conservative cause more alive and its hopes more buoyant than I was led to expect, and the brief moments I have had in Manitoba with the stalwarts of the party, and in this meeting tonight, has cheered me considerably. I can see a revived interest in the aims and purposes of the party, and am convinced that many who deserted us are returning. I appreciate the kindly expression of feeling that you have shown me, and can assure you that if we unflinchingly and courageously face the coming fight we shall overthrow the King government. But whether we do, or do not, I assure you of my firm intention to stand on our national policy, and though I am not giving you a new brand of wisdom, I am rather emphasizing the principles that our forefathers practised, and trust that they will become more prevalent on the plains than they have of late been. If we are to check the immigration of our people to the United States we must have our factories reopened and operating, our mineral resources in full swing of development, and our large areas of uncultivated land in possession of satisfied settlers, and I am fully convinced that protection will obtain those things for us. Along with this we must continue our efforts to more closely cement the ties of the Empire."

The President, on behalf of the club, thanked Mr. Meighen for his address, and after the singing of the National Anthem Mr. Meighen mingled with the audience, greeting old friends and making the acquaintance of many staunch supporters.

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