

CHOOSING A GOVERNMENT LEADER

Matters Now Under Discussion at Ottawa Affect Parties as Well as Individuals—Decision on Fiscal Policy Must be Reached

(Special to *The Monetary Times*)

Ottawa, December 18th, 1919.

THE political world was turned into a turmoil this week by the news that Sir Robert Borden had decided to resign as Canadian prime minister. While a few of his intimate friends knew that his health was such that an early retirement was likely, yet the usual wisecracks at Ottawa were unprepared for the announcement. The facts are that the final decision was not taken until a week ago, after Sir Robert had visited Montreal and been thoroughly examined by a famous physician. His advice was so imperative that the prime minister must drop out of the turmoil of politics, if he was not to suffer a complete breakdown, that Sir Robert at once decided to resign, and so informed his colleagues.

Who Will Succeed?

That Sir Robert's retirement at the present juncture will set the political pot fairly seething is undoubted. There is no outstanding figure in the government or in parliament who can step into his shoes and with certainty hold the government supporters together and command the respect of the country. If Sir Thomas White had remained in the cabinet and had his old-time vigor he would without doubt be the choice; he may return in any case, although he has informed his closest friends he is out of politics for good. If ever there was a time for sane, steady leadership it is now.

There is a growing feeling that there will be an election. An election after all might clear the atmosphere. That the new farmers' and labor party would be a powerful element, if not the dominating factor in a new house is certain. There are many predictions that Hon. T. A. Crerar will be the next Prime Minister of Canada, and judging by the way the wind is blowing, this is no idle guess.

Tariff Issue Postponed

An announcement was made this week by Sir Henry Drayton that the general revision of the tariff had been postponed. The reasons advanced were that the general world-situation, economically and industrially, had not settled down or improved since the war, but if anything had grown worse. In view of this situation an immediate and hurried revision would be unwise. In the meantime statements in regard to need for tariff revision along various lines would be welcomed. This is only half the truth. The facts are that the change in finance ministers and the general political turmoil, combined with the Victory Loan campaign shoved consideration of the tariff and a tariff commission completely out of the minds of the cabinet. When the ministers did get down to the subject they found that there was no time to appoint a ministerial commission which should thoroughly inquire into the question in time for action this coming session. In view of this it was decided to postpone the whole problem. How the low-tariff elements of the Unionist party will take this announcement remains to be seen; it will give impetus to the cross-bench movement and will add to the troubles of the successor of Sir Robert Borden.

One thing is certain; if the Unionist party is long to survive, it will have to decide on some definite policy. At present no one knows what its fiscal policy is—as a matter of fact it has none—it is neither fish, flesh nor devil. If it is to have a future it would seem that it must be a protectionist party. The Liberals have already committed themselves to a platform little short of free trade, while the farmers are, of course, out and out free trade.

The government seems to have at last awakened to the possibilities of commercial air navigation. Under a bill passed last session an Air Board was created with power to make regulations and to control the new transportation system. The board was authorized to investigate means by which aerial transportation could be used to advantage in public undertakings.

UNION OF QUEBEC MUNICIPALITIES

Constitution of New Organization Has Many Innovations—Good Support Indicated by First Convention

(Special to *The Monetary Times*.)

Montreal, December 16, 1919.

THAT the province of Quebec, which was the birthplace of the Union of Canadian Municipalities, should be the only province (except Prince Edward Island) that did not possess a provincial union, seems strange. It is true that such a body was organized some years ago, but it died a natural death, for there was no one sufficiently interested in the work after Major Papineau went overseas, and so left the secretaryship vacant.

However, a small meeting of local mayors decided that such a union was necessary, and a provisional committee called a two-days' convention in Montreal, for Monday and Tuesday this week. The city authorities rose to the occasion, and not only allowed the use of the council chamber, but also invited all the delegates to attend a banquet on Monday evening. Evidently the psychological moment had arrived, for over 380 delegates registered, from some 220 of the varied municipalities that are found in the province.

Fees Based on Assessment

On Monday morning, the provisional committee discussed the constitution, which contains some very radical ideas, not found in that of any other provincial union. First, the fees are not based upon population, as elsewhere, but on the assessed value of the municipality, which is quite an innovation, and is claimed to be more equitable.

Then the constitution calls for a board of trustees, who shall not necessarily be municipal officials, but men of acknowledged standing, and these are elected for a term of years, so as to secure that permanence that has proved so necessary, because of its absence in other similar bodies. This, it is understood, means that incorporation will be sought.

The question of what the fees should be was argued at length, but it was finally decided to make the minimum \$10, and the maximum, \$200, so that even the smallest rural municipality might not find it too expensive to become a member.

An Information Bureau

Then a further, and very striking feature, is the creation of the executive committee into a body that shall be a source of information to the municipalities that become members. The committee will give, or secure, legal, engineering, financial, or other advice for its members, the aim being to save the small municipalities from heavy expenses, such as sending down lawyers to the legislature at Quebec, or being misled by unskilful engineers.

The election of officers resulted as follows:—

Patron, Hon. Walter Mitchell, Minister of Municipal Affairs; hon. president, Mayor Martin, M.L.C., Montreal; hon. first vice-president, Mayor Henri Lavigueur, Quebec; hon. second vice-president, Mayor White, K.C., Sherbrooke; hon. treasurer, C. A. Furse, Montreal; president, Mayor Joseph Beaubien, Outremont; first vice-president, Mayor Alexandre Thurber, Longueuil; second vice-president, Mayor P. T. Bouchard, Ste. Hyacinthe; third vice-president, Mayor P. W. McLagan, Westmount; secretary-treasurer, Mayor R. Prieur, Pointe-aux-Trembles.

Board of Directors—Mayor A. E. D'Artois, Farnham; Mayor Archambault, Hull; Ald. Brodeur, Montreal; Ald. Nault, Grand'Mere; Fred. Wright, Canadian Municipal Journal; Mayor Laroque, Ste. Zotique; Ald. Bedard, Quebec; Ald. Brunelle, Chambly; Mayor Paris, St. John, Deschailions; Mayor Lefebvre, St. Philip; Mayor Raymond, Sixteen Island Lake; Ald. Verge, Quebec; Mayor A. B. Hunt, Bury; Ald. Jos. Rheault; Mayor L. Magnan, Plessisville.

On Tuesday afternoon Mr. Morin explained the working of the new Municipal Act, answering numerous questions. In the evening, Harry Bragg, of the Canadian Municipal Journal, gave a talk on "Housing and Slums." Dr. Nadeau, Provincial Director of Housing, also gave a long address.