

Federation requested to arrange for Convention

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.

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.

Severance of Party Relationships not pleasing to contemplate

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.

Many opportunities for service

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 found it possible to leave a personal account of some of their life's experiences. That it was equally unfortunate that we did not possess from the pen of each, some account of national developments, and great events, as they, themselves, had known them in the making.

Some glimpses of Public Life

From time to time, since I made that observation, I have read in the press that I had already entered upon the task of writing my memoirs. Indeed, I have received from more than one publishing house, enquiries as to whether their representatives might not discuss with me terms upon which the memoirs might be published. I do not deny that there are a few things which I should like to say, or to leave in written form, which I would hope might encourage younger men to take some part in public life, and which I would also hope might be helpful to them in the service of their country. I should like, too, to leave some account, were that possible, of some of the great events of our times, as I have watched them develop, and have glimpsed them from behind the scenes. Such a record might be of interest and value to a succeeding generation if not to our own. I must tell you, however, that this is not a task which can be performed in a day, nor yet in a year, nor is it a task that could be entered upon so long as one's responsibilities continue to be what mine have been in the past, and what they are at present. I regret to have to say that up to this moment, I have not found it possible to write a single line.

There are a few other matters, too long neglected, which perhaps I may be pardoned for also wishing to overtake. I believed, while the war was on, that the chance for all this would come when the war was over. I now see, if it is to come at all, it must come very soon. I have never sought either ease or idleness. I have found my greatest happiness in work. That happiness, if spared, I expect to continue to find along this well tried path. I know, however, that, in the even-tide of life, the shadows lengthen speedily, and that "the night cometh wherein no man can work".

Present Duty and Plans for the Future

Of one thing, you may be sure. If I cease to lead the Party, I shall never cease to have the Party's interests and its future near to my heart. Nor is it likely, be the sacrifice what it may, that I shall knowingly shirk any responsibility which the needs of our time may seem to demand, and which I feel I am able to meet.