

"LET BAD ENOUGH ALONE."

DOMINANT among the 1911 appeals was the cautious conservative plea: "Let well enough alone". This was an unusual policy for a young country. But times were good. Prosperity abounded. Fifteen years of progressive government had developed Canada from cramped colonial dependency and struggling childhood into strong young nationhood within the Empire. An enterprising immigration policy had peopled its prairies. Agricultural production had manifested the great possibilities of its fertile lands. Industrial activity was building up its cities and towns. Sound financial administration had established its credit in the world's money markets. Canadians were a deservedly proud and satisfied people. And a majority of them voted to "let well enough alone".

The Borden administration took office. It is now in its third year. It was a coalition government. The members of its ministry held totally divergent views on many important and immediate matters of policy. Agreement was impossible. Action was deferred. Lethargy resulted. Canadian progress was stayed. And the touch of stringency found the young Dominion unprepared.

Serious conditions have resulted. Farmers found themselves facing a tight and exacting money situation under unusual taxation burdens. Industrial activity was stayed and thousands of workers thrown out of employment or required to work upon shortened hours and decreased pay. The credit of the country suffered impairment. Public enterprises were held up. "Well enough" became "Bad enough". The test of actual trial found the Borden Government unprepared. It merely amended its dictum. "Let well enough alone" became "Let bad enough alone".

Parliament met, and Liberalism called for action. It demanded strong, statesmanlike steps to alleviate existing conditions, to woo back prosperity and good times, to restore the country's credit. It placed responsibility upon the trusts and combines which have operated under the privileges of protective tariffs to the detriment of the public weal. It called for fewer millionaires and more satisfied and contented people. It asked the benefits of free wheat for the

farmers, free food for the consumers, and a general and thorough overhauling of such conditions as were shown to have militated against the interests of the general public. And it demanded prompt and effective action.

Liberalism based its position not upon the untried premises of theory, but upon the experience of the world. It pointed to the world-wide movement toward the rights of democracy, evidenced by the upheavals under David Lloyd George in Britain, the emancipation under Woodrow Wilson in the United States, and the legislative progress under the recent tariff reduction edict of the Reichstag in Germany. It demanded that Canada join the progressive procession.

But the Big Interests which so largely direct the conduct and policy of the Borden Government are not allied with such progressive movements. They "view with alarm" anything calculated to interfere with their existing privileged and protected position. They call a halt upon anything which may divert some of their surplus profits into the pockets of the needy producer and artisan. "No, no", they cry, "Do not disturb anything. Let everything alone." Mr. Borden and his colleagues obey and do nothing.

THE NAVAL ACT ANOMALY.

IN Canada today there is the anomalous condition of a Government continuing to ask Parliament for money for a naval service and at the same time refusing to provide the service.

In the estimates for the coming fiscal year the Government asks a grant of over \$2,500,000 for the Department of Naval Affairs. A great part of the proposed grant is ostensibly for purposes of the naval service, the balance being mainly for fisheries protection and the hydrographic survey. But the Government which asks for this large sum from the public treasury for a naval service does not propose to do anything in the way of furthering the work of such a service.

The Naval Service Act of 1910 is still on the statutes. It provides for the development and maintenance of a naval service in Canada. The Government, owing to its compromised position dare not repeal the Act, and at the same

time, it dare not carry out its provisions.

During the fiscal year now drawing to a close the Government spent hundreds of thousands of dollars under the Department of Naval Service. But during the year the training vessels purchased by the department before the change of Government have been kept tied up to the docks. The Government has made no effort to lead men to enlist; instead it has discouraged enlistment and, indeed, has even encouraged the desertion of those who enrolled in the service before 1911.

In the House this session the Opposition members have complained, and complained with good reason, of the Government's anomalous course. If the ministry does not propose to administer the Naval Service Act in accordance with its provisions, why should Parliament vote public money to be spent ostensibly under that law? What is the Government's intention? Do the Ministers intend to keep the vessels of the service tied up to wharves, idle and useless? Do they intend to do nothing in the way of administering a naval service? If nothing is to be done, there is no good reason for grants being made by Parliament for a service which is not to be kept up and developed.

Every reasonable man, whatever his views as to what the naval policy of Canada should be, will agree that the Opposition point is well taken. If the Government has no intention of actively carrying on the work of a naval service then it obtains money, the people's money, under false pretences when it takes huge sums from the treasury for the purposes of such a service. It is wasting the public money when it does so.

It is a fair and proper claim, too, that the intention of the Government as to the naval service should be frankly communicated to Parliament and to the country, without further subterfuge or delay. The people have every right to know what it is proposed to do. When money is being asked from Parliament for any purpose, it is not a sufficient answer to tell the people's representatives that as respects its use the Ministry's intention will be made known "in due course".