

THE LIBERAL MONTHLY

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ELECTION—CONSCRIPTION.

Two significant admissions have recently been made in the organs of the so-called Union government. One, in the Montreal Gazette, was to the effect that Ontario was making a constitutional error in not holding an election. One of the arguments of the Gazette was that an election in this province would not cause much disturbance; another was to the effect that by not holding an election a dangerous precedent would be established and one which, in the future, might be evoked to balk the will of the people. To those who recall the Tory arguments against a Dominion election last fall the position of the Gazette is amusing. The Liberals were accused during the campaign of precipitating an election that would only disorganize Canada's machinery to prosecute the war, and it was even stated that there was German propaganda behind the Liberal determination to attempt to ascertain the will of the people—a purpose which the government skilfully blocked by depriving thousands of voters of the franchise and bestowing it upon many thousands of others who were not entitled to it.

The second admission is far more significant. It is to the effect that the popular supposition that the Military Service Act is designed to raise 100,000 men is altogether erroneous. The Tory press apologists now assert that the Act nowhere mentions 100,000 men, or any number of men. This may be quite true, but the government organs forget the flamboyant declaration of Premier Borden that he would add enough men to the overseas force to bring it up to 500,000 in all. As there were something near 400,000 men at that time under arms, or had enlisted in Canada, the only reasonable conclusion is that 100,000 more were to be secured by the new legislation. But the truth is that the administration press is beginning to realize that the required number of men cannot be secured, that not more than 40,000 or at the most 50,000 can be enlisted under the compulsory measure. They are simply preparing a soft place for the government to fall when all the facts are brought out this session in the house of Commons.

FISH.

It is becoming somewhat of a monotonous occurrence to read of "cheaper fish" in the daily press. We are told every so often that the government is looking after cheaper fish and are regaled with descriptions of the manner in which the food is to be transported and retailed. As a general thing these reports are all of a piece. Some small shipments of fish have reached the larger centers but the whole effort is very much of a failure, if, indeed, it can be considered serious at all. Places like Ottawa and Kingston have received 500 or 600 pounds of fish at intervals of several weeks but it cannot be pretended that this is implementing the

rosy promises of our paternal administration. Would it not be better if the fish story were regarded in the same light as the piscatorial achievements of local Isaak Waltons, whose tales, while amusing, are lacking in the only substantial proof acceptable in the circumstances?

THEIR REWARD.

The patronage game as practised in Ottawa has proved almost too strong for even the converts to Union government. Following several flagrant episodes which were marked by the giving of soft jobs to party workers for the Tory machine, the announcement was calmly made that the administration had retired the veteran postmaster of Ottawa and had appointed in his place Mr. Andrew Acres, a former real estate agent and secretary of the local Tory machine organization. This was hailed by an angry protest from the Ottawa Citizen which advocated Union government during the campaign. The Citizen, in its simplicity, imagined that the new administration was out to abolish patronage but it has received a rude awakening. It is significant that the thorough-paced Tory journals in the capital emitted never a squeak while the Citizen was working itself up into a fury. The Citizen made the mistake of imagining that pre-election promises were to be respected after the ballots were counted.

PRODUCTION.

The truth of the Liberal contention that the enlisting of another huge number of men for military purposes would redound to the disadvantage of Canada and her Allies because of the greater need of more production is already being demonstrated. The provinces have made representations to Ottawa that some 35,000 men are needed at once for spring crops, while for the fall harvests over 50,000 will be required. All these men are needed west of Ontario—in the very provinces where conscription secured its largest vote in the general elections! Unless labor in sufficient quantity can be got Canada and the Allies will suffer severely from higher prices and actual lack of certain commodities. The only available market for labor is in the United States, and we shall have to look to the republic for such aid as may come to us in this crisis.

PATRONAGE.

We hear a great deal about the abolition of Patronage in the Civil Service and boast has been freely made of what a Union Government could and would do in that way. Some of the newspapers supported Union Government in the election on the ground that such a government could accomplish the end of this evil when a Party government could not. Some of these papers are now disappointed to find no sign of the reform they wanted. In fact, there is every evidence that it is forgotten. What could they expect from a Government headed by Sir Robert Borden? We must judge men's future actions by their past. What evidence is there that Sir Robert Borden is capable of Civil Service Reform?

In 1908 the Laurier Government introduced a