SEPTEMBER 21 IS DATE OF THE ELECTIONS; SIR WILFRID LAURIER'S RINGING MANIFESTO

RECIPROCITY ISSUE NOW UP TO THE PEOPLE

Liberals Are Confident of Victory

Members Start for Their Constituencies in Jubilant Mood — Tories Complain, Now That the Contest is Brought On.

Ottawa, July 30—With over two years of its legal tenure of office still to run, the eleventh parliament of Canada has been dissolved—talked to death by a stubborn minority.

The government on Saturday morning, after a full meeting of the cabinet council, decided that any further attempt to pass the reciprocity agreement in the face of the frank and determined obstruction of the minority of the people's representatives in parliament was useless, and, on the advice of his ministers, the governor general, yesterday afternoon, issued proclamations proroging the house, dissolving parliament, calling for an election and a new parilament on September 21, with nominations on September 14, providing for the issuing of the writs forthwith to be returnable on October 7, and fixing October 11 as the tentative date for the meeting of the new parliament.

That is the government's answer to the opposition obstructionists. The people of Canada are now asked to decide the issue as to whether or not they want freer trade with the United States, and whether the majority in parliament are to rule.

Fielding Makes The Announcement.

It was a smiling and confident prime minister who met the waiting correspondents at the door of the council chamber at 1.30 o'clock yesterday afternoon, at the conclusion of the cabinet council session.

"Gentlemen," he said, "Mr. Fielding has some news for you."

It was a characteristic and tactful compliment to the finance minister, who is primarily responsible for the drafting of the reciprocity agreement, and a significent indication of the issue on which the battle will be fought. Then Mr. Fielding, also smiling and confident, made the brief but pregnant announcement: "Gentlemen, parliament has been dissolved. The elections will take place on September 21."

The news spread like wildfire, pressmen hurrying to telegraph offices were waylaid by the anxiously waiting members, who had but an hour or so before got word of the rumor that the end had arrived. The news was passed from group to group in the commons corridors, bulletined at the newspaper offices and flashed by the members themselves to their various constituencies.

The long tension was at an end. In the Liberal ranks the word that the appeal was to be taken forthwith to the supreme court of the electorate was received with great and sincere enthusiasm. Some of the French-Canadian Liberals cheered and sang in the corridors. The English-speaking Liberals were a little less demonstrative, but all were evidently in fine fettle and not a doubt was expressed as to what the people's verdict would be.

A greater majority than has been is the confident verdict of every Liberal member of parliament.

Opposition Not So Enthusiastic.

In the opposition camp, the news was received with considerable less enthusiasm. Despite the apparent eagerness of the obstructionists to force an election on the reciprocity issue it has been an open secret for some days past that a considerable number of Mr. Borden's followers believe that a tactical mistake has been made and that on this issue the party is doomed to hopeless defeat.

However, it was recognized that the party, after making valor the better part of discretion had burned its bridges and left no retreat open. Having forced the issue they attempted to welcome it with as good grace as possible and publicly declared confidence in the result, although privately they admit that the best they can hope for is to cut down the government majority sufficiently to compel another election next year, meanwhile continuing the blockade of reciprocity.

An immediate attempt was made to blame the government for bringing on dissolution so soon and to befog the issue by protesting that further time should have been allowed to discuss, in the house, Sir Wilfrid's attitude at the imperial conference and to allow of further investigation of the charges against Hon. Frank Oliver.

Members on both sides at once started "packing up" and with the evening trains the exodus began in full force. The eleventh parliament was closed and probably to not a few of the departing members came the thought, perhaps after an eight-months' session not unmixed with blessing, "the place thereof shall know me no more."

The election is brought on within the shortest time possible, in which the lists for northern Ontario can be gotten ready. The work of the revising judges has been quietly expedited during the past two weeks and it is expected that revision will be completed by Sept. 12, allowing a full week for the printing and forwarding of the lists to the various polling subdivisions.

It has not yet been definitely decided whether or not there will be any deferred elections. If conditions will permit all elections will be held on the same day, although probably this will be found impossible in Comox-Atlin, where more than a week is required between nomination and polling day to have the ballot papers printed and forwarded to the outlying polls.

New Parliament to Meet October 25.

The government plans to call the new parliament together as early as possible in October after the return of the writs. This will probably be on Wednesday, Oct. 25, when the new parliament will be opened by the Duke of Connaught. It will be a short extra session for the passing of the reciprocity measure and supply for the balance of the current fiscal year. A second session of the new parliament will be held probably beginning early in February next year.

There was a rush for ticket offices to secure traveling reservations, and then many of the members discovered that as the banks were closed they could not get funds for traveling until Monday. There was indignant denunciation of the government by Conservative members for closing parliament after banking hours and hotel cashiers were swamped with applications to cash checks.

Bitter Campaign Is Expected.

It is generally agreed that the two months' campaign will be vigorous and bitter. Reciprocity will be the paramount issue, though the Nationalist-Conservative alliance of Quebec province will endeavor to introduce the naval issue into the contest and the loyalty and anti-annexation cry will be raised in Ontario and other parts of the country.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier and all of his ministers will open the campaign next week and arrangements for public meetings in all the provinces are now under way.

The prime minister will confine his attention principally to the central provinces of Ontario and Quebec, but will also probably make a brief tour of the maritime provinces.

Hon. Messrs. Templeman and Oliver will look after the campaign on the Pacific coast and in the prairie provinces.

Hon. Mr. Fielding, Sir Frederick Borden and Hon. Wm. Pugsley will devote their attention to the maritime provinces. The finance minister will also address a few Ontario meetings.

Opposition leader Borden will give most of his time to Ontario and Nova Scotia, though time may be found for him to deliver speeches in some of the other provinces.

This is the first time a session has ever been closed without the appearance of the governor-general in military state at the senate chamber to give formal prorogation. As the senate has made a longer adjournment than the commons session, not due to reassemble until Aug. 9 this summary method of dismissal had to be resorted to.

Tory Mud-Slinging Begins.

After clamoring for months for an election on the reciprocity issue the opposition campaign managers are already seeking to lead the fight along other lines where the argument may be made with insinuation and mud-slinging, rather than by appeal to the economic facts of the government's proposals for freer trade with the United States.

In an interview given the press last night by Premier McBride, of British Columbia, who spent the day here with Mr. Borden en route home from the coronation, first, emphasis was laid not on the reciprocity stand of the opposition but on the fact that the government had asked for dissolution, while the charges against Hon. Frank Oliver were still pending before the commons special committee and with witnesses en route to Ottawa to give evidence on Tuesday next.

Mr. McBride saw in the manoeuvre an obvious attempt to escape the exposure of an inquiry into the facts. The opposition leader, Mr. Borden, and the Conservative members of the house are also making this point one of the features of their comments on the dissolution as well as insinuating also that Sir Wilfrid was afraid of a debate in the commons during the coming week on his attitude at the imperial conference.

During the coming campaign this sort of insidious appeal to the electors will doubtless be worked to the limit. As a matter of fact, had circumstances permitted the government would have welcomed before dissolution the fullest discussion of the imperial conference proceedings and the winding up of the inquiry in the charges against Mr. Oliver as begun by the committee before the coronation adjournment.

In regard to the former question Sir Wilfrid will have ample opportunity, however, to make his position clear on the public platform, and in any case the records of the conference proceedings speak for themselves.

The Oliver Inquiry.

In regard to the interrupted investigation of the committee on the charges against the minister of the interior, it may be noted in the first place that the essential point at issue, namely, as to the charge that there was some connection between the minister's bank account and the land grants to the Canadian Northern Railway, has already been cleared up, the evidence of Mr. Young, secretary of the railway lands branch of the interior department, given before the committee last May, showed conclusively that the land transfers referred to were made solely on grounds of public policy and there was nothing sinister or indefensible in the transaction.

From the standpoint of the public interest and so far as any specific allegation in the charges themselves went that was the main point the committee had to consider.

The evidence of other witnesses could have served in the main only to clear up the malice behind the charges and to set at rest the insinuations as to the public and personal probity of the minister, and no one regrets more than Hon. Mr. Oliver that the opportunity to do this must now be deferred for a short time.

To have heard all the witnesses summoned before the committee and to have completed the inquiry in all its phases would have probably taken at least a fortnight's time, especially in view of the fact that the opposition had already objected to committee sittings while the house was sitting.

It would have involved parliament continuing in session for another two weeks or so and under the farcical conditions of opposition obstruction which have prevailed for three weeks past any such delay in dissolution would have been unjustifiable and would not have been tolerated by the members.

To have heard only a few witnesses and not to have completed the inquiry, as might have been done had the committee sat on Tuesday and Wednesday next, would have been unfair to the minister and inconclusive to the country.

Oliver Anxious for Inquiry.

As a matter of fact, it may be noted that last week when the committee met and decided to hear evidence on Tuesday next, the earliest date in which Mr. Carvell, the absent member of the committee, and the Edmonton witnesses could be present, it was suggested by Mr. Oliver himself that the committee might meanwhile lose no time but could go on at once with the examination of the newspaper editors from Toronto.

At that time there was no thought that dissolution would come within two or three days, and as a matter of fact dissolution was not really decided upon until yesterday's council meeting.

Mr. Oliver himself makes it very plain that he has no desire at all, and never has had any desire, to prevent an investigation into the charges made against him. Asked by your correspondent today for a statement in regard to the investigation now pending in regard to the insinuations made against him in the Toronto World and Telegram, he said:

"So far as I am concerned I am very sorry that the investigation cannot go forward at present. It is in the same position as many other matters of even greater importance and must wait until the verdict of the electors on reciprocity has been given. On the reassembling of parliament after the elections I propose to ask that the inquiry be resumed without delay."

Cabinet Changes Uncertain.

Whether or not there will be any changes in the personnel of the cabinet before the election is still uncertain.

Had the parliament run its usual course and the election been delayed until next year there would have been, as already forecasted, two or three cabinet changes.

But on the reciprocity issue and with a principle at stake for which every cabinet minister and Liberal member can so cheerfully fight, there is no one who is anxious to withhold his hand. Sir Alan Aylesworth's attitude, as announced to his constituents in North York some weeks ago, that only in the event of an immediate election on the reciprocity issue would he reconsider his decision to retire from parliament after the present term had expired, expresses the feeling also of others of his fellow members.

Sir Alan, who is being strongly urged to continue his invaluable services to the government will announce his decision shortly.

Sir Frederick Borden, who was slated for the high commissionership at London, may also run again in Kings county, Nova Scotia, on the reciprocity issue, although in any event there is no doubt as to this seat going Liberal.

Hon. Mr. Brodeur, whose serious illness last year gave rise to the well founded report that he would leave the constant strain of administering two large and important departments of the public service, to take the vacancy on the supreme court bench for which his legal training will fit him, may remain for another fight, but the probabilities are that he will accept the supreme court judgeship before the election. In that event it is understood that Dr. Beland, the young, able and popular member for Beauce, will be called to the cabinet as postmaster general, Hon. Mr. Lemieux being transferred to the portfolio of marine and naval affairs.

Many Important Measures Blocked

The parilament just closed by dissolution was the shortest in point of time in Canada's history. It lasted about two years and a half, the last general election having occurred on October 26, 1908. The only shorter parliament was that preceding the defeat of Sir John A. Macdonald by the Liberal forces under Hon. Alexander Mackenzie in 1874, which lasted only a year and a half.

The session just closed, however, was among the longest, having opened on November 18 of last year. Notwithstanding its length there was comparatively little legislation of importance placed upon the statutes, largely owing to the policy of obstruction adopted by the opposition since the introduction of the reciprocity agreement.

Among the measures left on the unfinished order paper are the grain bill, the copyright bill, the branch lines bill, the banking and railway act affecting owners of live stock and the bill relative to explosives.

The political feature of the session was the opposition revolt against the leader of the party which for a time threatened to reduce the party to chaos and the efforts which have been made to rehabilitate the present leader and surround him with provincial lieutenants.

Likely Borden's Finish.

In this connection it is generally felt that the coming election may be Mr. Borden's last. The revolt against his leadership will probably be revived on the defeat of the party, even if he should survive the election in Halifax, which is regarded as very uncertain. It is well known that Mr. Borden has little taste for the leadership in the condition in which the party is at present, and his close friends are inclined to the belief that the further dissatisfaction, which will follow polling, will lead to his prompt withdrawal from public life.

It is the general belief that the coming parliament may attempt to grapple with legislation having in view the obstruction of parliamentary business. The sessions of parliament have been gradually lengthening and the embroglio which necessitated dissolution two years before the life of the late parliament had terminated, has emphasized the necessity for some method of regulating procedure.

Another interesting feature of the present election is that it will create a new Canadian record for the tenure of one government in office. The government of Sir John A. Macdonald remained continuously in office for eighteen years, from 1879 to 1896. That of Sir Wilfrid Laurier has now been in office for fifteen years and with the new parliament to be elected on Sept. 21 will be installed for four or five years longer, thus constituting a new record.

The Liberal party under the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Laurier has grown in popular estimation, and the popularity of the prime minister was never stronger than it is today. The rank and file of the members manifest the fullest confidence that the present majority of the government will be materially increased by the coming elections.

McBride Consulted.

For nearly three hours Hon. Richard McBride, premier of British Columbia, was closeted with R. L. Borden in the latter's office at the parliament buildings last night. The doors were closed against all but G. H. Perley, the chief opposition whip, who was present for a portion of the conference. Premier McBride landed in Montreal on his return from attending the coronation ceremonies yesterday and found an urgent Macedonian call awaiting him from Ottawa. The wires, it is said, burned with appeals to come to the capital at once. He came up on the local express, reaching Ottawa at seven and departed at midnight for the west.

It is announced that the Conservative leader and the chief whip spent the time in seeking to obtain an assurance that the British Columbia premier would be a Conservative candidate at the forthcoming federal elections. According to despatches from the west he has already been tendered the party nomination for the riding of Comox-Atlin, but the federal management are more anxious that he should run in Victoria, where it is felt the Hon. William Templeman will in all probability redeem the seat for the Liberals. The minister of inland revenue has decided to contest the provincial capital in the government interests.

After the conference with Mr. Borden, Mr. Perley assembled the Conservative members still in the capital, and Mr. McBride joined them in caucus. There was considerable cheering and it is understood that every inducement was held out to the British Columbia premier to save the situation, but Mr. McBride would give no assurance.

Interviewed at the close of the gathering, he stated his loyalty to the Conservative party, but added discreetly that he had "responsibilities and obligations to the people of British Columbia and my colleagues and supporters." He would be able to make known his decision after reaching home, but he was sure, "No matter whether I am a candidate or not," that British Columbia would make a good showing in the Conservative columns. He predicted a sweep of the province for the opposition.

The Conservatives were patently disappointed in obtaining no assurance from the British Columbia premier. The general impression is that Mr. McBride will prefer to sacrifice his attorney general on the altar of party tribute. Mr. Bowser, it is said, is anxious to run and Mr. McBride is anxious to let him.

It is recognized that Mr. Bowser's reputed strength rests almost solely in his connection with the provincial government, and that as a federal candidate he would stand an excellent chance of defeat. Moreover it is more than hinted that Mr. McBride would shed no tears on the departure of his attorney general. Should Mr. Bowser, however, determine to submit his name for the Conservative nomination in Vancouver he will probably have to contest the nomination with Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, who is said to have ambitions to re-enter the federal arena. There is no love lost between Sir Hibbert and the provincial government and the former is believed to be courting the opportunity to triumph over Mr. Bowser at the party convention. Moreover, Mr. Cowan, the sitting member, has thrown in his lot with Sir Hibbert and is reported as pronouncedly opposed to Mr. Bowser's ambitions. It is significant that Mr. Cowan took no part in the Ottawa receptions to Mr. McBride, and was directly absent from the party councils when the provincial premier was summoned by his federal colleagues. Altogether the situation which confronts Mr. Borden and his lieutenants in British Columbia is to say the least somewhat embarrassing.

Borden Beclouds the Issue.

Mr. Borden's somewhat remarkable manifesto is here accepted as an indication that despite the oft-reiterated declarations of the opposition during the period of its obstruction that it would welcome a direct appeal to the people on the reciprocity issue, an effort will be made so far as possible to becloud that issue by the introduction of as many other phases of political differences, as can be incorporated into the campaign.

It is significant that the opposition leader devotes only a small part of his attention to the real issue of reciprocity, and makes no attempt to discuss it on economic grounds. It is in no sense an answer to the clear-cut and compelling statement of the issue made by Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

In regard to Mr. Borden's argument as to the failure of the government to ask for supply, it is quite sufficient answer to say that this whole matter has been very carefully considered by the government and a careful analysis of supply already granted shows that there are ample funds available to carry on all necessary public works in progress and to pay civil service salaries until parliament meets again in October, when the balance of supply can be passed without delay.

After compelling dissolution without a redistribution bill, Mr. Borden now seeks to throw the onus upon the government. He pleads his offer of April last to hurry up the census and bring in an early redistribution bill, regardless of the fact that under the statute the census cannot be taken earlier than June 1, and that the figures would not be available as a basis for drafting a bill before October at the earliest.

Experience of previous redistributions show that it would take probably four or five months to put the bill through parliament. That would mean that reciprocity would have to stand over until well on into the next year.

The West Wants Reciprocity Most

The government takes the view that the vital issue now is to secure the benefit of reciprocity for this season's crops, and to keep faith with President Taft, who has let nothing stand in the way of his part of the agreement. It is believed that the west at present is much more concerned with securing reciprocity as speedily as possible than with securing a larger representation in the commons, which will follow in due course, as one of the first duties of the new parliament.

Fear Redistribution.

The real speciousness of the opposition plea that the government is doing an injustice to the west, and the real desire of the obstructionists is very clearly shown up in an editorial yesterday in the Ottawa Journal, written by P. D. Ross, a very intimate personal friend of Mr. Borden and the ex-president of the local Conservative organization. Under the caption of "Good Politics" the editorial says:

"To allow the adoption of reciprocity, another session of parliament and a redistribution bill meant that thirty new seats in parliament would be allotted to western Canada, where the government influence is overwhelming and unscrupulous, and that a general election would take place with a tolerable certainty of a large majority of these new seats being captured by the government, not because the government's performance or platform deserves it, but because the power which the immigration machinery, the land laws and agencies and the public needs of a rapidly settling new country give a tremendous advantage in elections to the party in power. The dice would have been worse loaded against them next year than now."

The balance of Mr. Borden's statement is concerned chiefly with the plea that dissolution was premature and that parliament should have been kept in session until the insinuations against Hon. Mr. Oliver had been investigated. As is pointed out elsewhere this would have involved at least another fortnight's continuation of the farce of the last two weeks, and the investigation, the vital part of which has already been covered, is simply deferred until October in view of the more important issue of reciprocity. The man who has chief reason to feel aggrieved at the postponement of the enquiry is the Hon. Frank Oliver himself.

FARMING IN AUSTRALIA

The Report of the Scottish Commission.

(Manchester Guardian).

In September, 1910, twelve Scottish agriculturists landed in Australia on the invitation of the commonwealth to make a four months' tour of the continent with a view to reporting on its rural conditions and activities. They had all some practical knowledge of their subject, and most of them had been on previous deputations of the kind to Denmark, Canada and Ireland. Their report is now published (Australia: Its Land Conditions and Prospects. William Blackwood & Sons, 1s.), and it makes valuable reading for the intending emigrant.

As to the emigrant himself, he need not, the commissioners think, be a country-bred man. Although it is only to those who have some knowledge of work on the land that the commonwealth government gives assisted passages, there is every hope of success for the townsman who is prepared to undergo a strenuous apprenticeship when he gets to Australia. It is by townsmen, the commission thinks, that the land of the commonwealth will in future be peopled. These should on their arrival go straight into farm service, despite the superficially superior attractions of the town.

"In a time of abounding prosperity such as the present, work in towns is specially plentiful and attractive. On the other hand the country outlook is at first sight disappointing; the wages, which generally include food and lodging, seem smaller; the hours are longer; the methods of working are strange; and the engagement offered him will probably be only for a season. After the busy time is over he finds that he must look about for fresh work. On a balancing of advantages, he may decide for a town life. Should he do so, however, he will make a serious mistake.

Secondly, the settler should not, if he has his way to make, be a married man. On this point—the subject lately of not a little criticism of Australia as a settling place—the commission has a good deal to say. A visit to the Emigrants' Home in Perth, where accommodation is provided for three days free, and at very moderate rates for seven days more, revealed the fact that single emigrants obtain situations, very much quicker than do married ones. On the sixth day after landing only twenty single men had not found employment, but the married couples had been less fortunate.

"Some of them without children had found employment on farms; some had placed their families in lodgings, and had gone to the country as single men; but so far as we could learn not one of the married men with children had yet got a situation on a farm where his wife and children could go with him. . . . The people most wanted in Australia, and other things being equal, most likely to make good citizens, are undoubtedly married couples with children. It is therefore a distinct misfortune for the commonwealth that such people have, in common honesty, to be warned that they may find it difficult to get situations in country service where their families can remain with them. This is recognized and acknowledged by everybody; and it may be hoped and even expected that efforts will be made by private employers and also by the state governments to remedy such a serious evil. While the problem is by no means an easy one, it should not pass the wit of man to solve; nor can it be altogether ignored by the progressive statesmen of the commonwealth."

This boycott of married couples is the more astonishing since the commissioners found that throughout Australia "the economic pressure of daily affairs carried on at a disadvantage from the scarcity of workers, along with the state policy of closer settlement, formed a conjunction of circumstances which were focused in the common saying, 'Australia's chief want is the want of population.' In addition to its retarding effect on population the policy has a definitely bad influence, the commissioners think, on local morals:

"The gathering together of numbers of unmarried men in quarters sometimes none too comfortable, with times of leisure for which no entertainment or recreation is provided, is not calculated to improve the morals of the district or the contentment of the men themselves."

The report deals briefly but thoroughly with the chief means by which farms can be acquired in the Commonwealth. The beginner, after he has served his apprenticeship and if he has not much means at his disposal, usually gets a farm on the share system. Under this he is provided by his landlord with land, a house, stock, and implements, and for his part provides all labor and hands over to the landlord a proportion of all profits that varies from half to two-thirds. But share-farming is, after all, a makeshift, and ultimately the settler will want to have entire ownership of a farm. He may get this on crown land which has never before been sold, on resumed land offered for sale by the state, or on land privately offered for sale. The main thing is that he should not acquire any land until he has been long enough in Australia to judge the value of his investment:

"It would be quite a mistake to suppose that the new-comer can at once have the offer of a good farm cut out of the crown lands. He can always get inferior land near a railway and good land blocks within reach of a line are so much in demand that they are snapped up practically as soon as they are thrown open for settlement."

The progressive land tax of the present government is doing much to make easy of access the second kind of land—that which is carved out in parcels from the large estates used till now for pasture. As this is the kind of land that will be most sought after by settlers, a description of a typical piece of the kind by the commissioners is valuable:

"The estate of Gunnible, near Gunnedah, in New South Wales, consisting of 10,000 acres, was divided into fifty-three farms of from 40 to 840 acres each, and the lots were put up to auction last November. We inspected the estate before the sale and found it to be fairly good farming land. A wheat crop of thirty bushels an acre had already been grown on part of it, and there was practically no clearing to be done; water could be got anywhere by sinking down 20 to 35 feet; the rainfall was reported to be 26 inches, and some of the blocks adjoined the river Namod and the town of Gunnedah. On these river flats lucerne and maize were said to do well. The result of the sale was that, with the exception of three blocks, everything was sold, the reserve prices being generally exceeded. The river blocks made from £10 10s. to £16, and the back blocks from £4 10s. to £6 16s., the average of the whole being about £6 9s. an acre. The buyers were nearly all local people, and the terms of sale were exceedingly liberal, 5 per cent of the money being cash, and the balance being spread over nineteen years with interest at 5 per cent."

The report goes with great detail into the expenses, for agricultural implements and the like, and the dangers from insects, drought, and other terrors peculiar to Australia which the settler will have to face. It pays generous tribute to the very efficient system of agricultural education throughout the Commonwealth, and points out that the sum spent on this is 1s. 6d. per head of the population, as against 2d. in Britain. In general it may be said that the commissioners have spoken with the farmer in his fields, the dairyman in his milking-shed, the pastoralist among his flocks, and the timber-grower in his forest reserve, and have obtained from them a very comprehensive account of what rural Australia has to offer to the emigrant.

LIBERAL CHIEFTAIN'S MANIFESTO

Ottawa, July 30.—Sir Wilfrid Laurier, in an address to the Canadian people issued yesterday after the dissolution of parliament, states the issue before the electors in clear and ringing tones as follows:

To the Canadian People:

Ottawa, July 29.—At all times, during the last forty years, it has been the constant effort of all political parties in Canada to make with the United States an arrangement for the free exchange of natural products between the two countries.

In 1854 Lord Elgin, on behalf of Canada and the Maritime Provinces, negotiated with the United States a treaty for that purpose which lasted until 1866, and which within the memory of many still alive, was of the greatest advantage.

Ever since the termination of that treaty all public men of any prominence in Canada, whatever their differences on other questions, have been unanimous in the attempt to again secure this free exchange of natural products. Nor is this to be wondered at, seeing that in the industries of agriculture, fisheries, lumbering and mining, Canada possesses advantages not enjoyed by any other country on earth, and that upon the markets secured for the products of these industries depends the growth of our manufacturing and commercial interests and the prosperity of all classes in the Dominion.

THE LATEST ATTEMPT OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY TO THAT END WAS MADE BY SIR JOHN MACDONALD, HIMSELF, WHO DISSOLVED PARLIAMENT IN 1891, FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUBMITTING TO THE ELECTORATE OF CANADA THE EXPEDIENCY OF HIS APPROACHING AGAIN THE AMERICAN AUTHORITIES FOR A RENEWAL OF THE TREATY OF 1854.

In 1893 the intention to obtain reciprocity with the United States, if possible, was made a prominent feature in the platform of the liberal party, upon which that party attained power in 1896.

After the present government took office it renewed in vain this offer to the United States, but meeting with no response, it declared that no further overtures of this nature would be made by Canada.

Within the last twelve months the president of the United States sent to Ottawa two commissioners from Washington, for the purpose of opening negotiations looking toward the lowering of the tariff barriers which have hitherto stood in the way of freer exchange of commodities between Canada and the United States. These negotiations, in January last, culminated in an agreement between the two governments, by which the duties of each country on such products might be lowered or altogether removed.

This agreement was strenously resisted in the United States by various interests, on the alleged ground that it was all to the advantage of Canada and to the detriment of the other country, but the view that it was naturally advantageous to both countries finally prevailed in congress, **AND THE AGREEMENT STANDS TODAY AS AN OFFER BY THE UNITED STATES TO CANADA OF THAT VERY MEASURE OF RECIPROCITY WHICH, FOR MORE THAN FORTY YEARS, HAS ENGAGED THE EARNEST AND CONSTANT EFFORTS OF EVERY LEADING CANADIAN STATESMAN.**

The present conservative party in parliament seeks absolutely to reverse the lifelong policy of its great leaders in the past, declaring that it will oppose to the bitter end the very principles enunciated by both Sir John Macdonald and Sir John Thompson in the last election addresses upon which each of these statesmen ever appealed to the Canadian people.

Not content to debate this proposition upon its meits, the conservative party in the house of commons has adopted a system of organized and avowed obstruction to prevent any vote being taken in parliament by which the opinion of your representatives there could be expressed.

DAY AFTER DAY, WHEN THE PRESIDING OFFICER HAD TRIED TO PUT THE QUESTION, HE HAS BEEN MET WITH DILATORY MOTIONS, BY ENDLESS SPEECHES, BY OBSTRUCTIVE DEVICES OF EVERY KIND, EACH PUT FORWARD ON SOME SPECIOUS PRETEXT, BUT IN REALITY NOTHING ELSE THAN AN ABUSE OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE.

SUCH PRETENCES ARE SIMPLY A CLUMSY ATTEMPT TO GIVE SOME COLOR TO UNWARRANTED AND UNDIGNIFIED OBSTRUCTION.

To overcome that obstruction, after a session which has already lasted eight months, would not only mean the continuation of the unseemly spectacle presented by the opposition in the house of commons since the resumption of its sittings on the 18th instant, but would also mean weeks and months of wasted time and perhaps, in the end, the loss for this season to the Canadian producer of the free American market.

In this condition of things it has seemed to his excellency's advisers more in accordance with the dignity of parliament, with the traditions of those British institutions which all true Canadians value so highly, and which the present opposition degrade with such a light heart, with the best interests of the country as a whole, to remit the issue to the people themselves, so that the people may judge between the government and the opposition, and declare whether they have changed their minds or whether they are still in favor of reciprocity in natural products, and whether they will or will not have the American market for the promising crop soon to be garnered in Canada.

THE ISSUE, MY FELLOW COUNTRYMEN, IS IN YOUR HANDS, AND TO YOUR DECISION HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT IN CANADA ARE WELL CONTENT TO LEAVE IT.

It has been alleged by the opposition that this agreement, if consummated, would imperil the connection with the mother country, and finally bring the annexation of Canada to the United States.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO TREAT SUCH AN ARGUMENT WITH ANY KIND OF RESPECT, IF INDEED IT CAN BE DIGNIFIED WITH THE NAME OF ARGUMENT, FOR IF IT HAS ANY MEANING, ITS MEANING IS THAT THE PEOPLE OF CANADA WOULD BE SEDUCED FROM THEIR ALLEGIANCE BY THE PROSPERITY TO FOLLOW THE LARGER FLOW OF NATURAL PRODUCTS FROM THIS COUNTRY TO THE OTHER. INDEED THE VERY REVERSE WOULD BE THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCE, FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF ALL AGES ABUNDANTLY TESTIFIES THAT TRADE IS EVER THE MOST POTENT AGENCY OF PEACE, AMITY, AND MUTUAL RESPECT BETWEEN NATIONS.

Nor is this all: this agreement, which in no way impairs our fiscal policy—which still maintains at the top-mast the fecund principle of British preference—this agreement by opening new avenues of trade hitherto closed, would further improve the friendly relations which now so happily exist between this country and the mother country, on the one hand and the American people, on the other hand, and which it is hoped may, at no distant day, eventuate into a general treaty or arbitration, the effect of which would be to remove for ever all possibilities of war between the great empire of which we are proud to form a part, and the great nation which we are proud to have as neighbors.

(Signed) WILFRID LAURIER.