

T H E

Canadian Courier

THE NATIONAL WEEKLY

VOL. 7

Toronto, January 1st, 1910

No. 5



REFLECTIONS

By THE EDITOR

JANUARY, 1910, will probably be one of the memorable months in the political history of the Dominion. The question of a Canadian navy and of its relation to the Imperial Defence

Force of the Empire is to be defined once and forever. The debate should be one of the most important that has ever taken place in the House of Commons. It will probably make and unmake reputations. It will probably decide the question as to who shall be Premier of Canada when the star of Sir Wilfrid Laurier has set. It may lay the basis for the next great conflict of the parties in a general election. It will certainly be of more importance, if not of greater interest to the people of Canada, than the results of the General Election now being decided in Great Britain. It may even be as important in relation to the future of the Empire generally.



FOR one year, this question of a Canadian contribution to the British Naval Defence Force has been the chief national topic. It has occupied more editorial space and been the theme of more public speeches than any other topic. It has been discussed at greater length in political caucuses of an official and non-official character. It has given the politicians and statesmen more ground for consideration than any topic in recent years. It has rivalled, in political interest, the Manitoba School Question, the Western Autonomy Bills and the National Transcontinental. It has produced several schools of thought in unexpected proportions and on unusual lines of cleavage.

At one time it seemed as if the question would be decided easily. The Ministers who went to Great Britain to attend the unofficial conference returned with a plan which seemed satisfactory. Sir Wilfrid and his ministers proceeded to assure their followers that a satisfactory solution had been reached. Mr. Borden, leader of the Opposition, after mature consideration, decided that in the main the Government's policy of a Canadian navy, built in Canada, controlled in Canada and manned by Canadians was almost if not quite satisfactory.

Then the muttering began. Down in Quebec a certain section of people began to talk against a contribution of any kind, even a contribution which was to be spent ostensibly for home protection. In the rural constituencies of the Maritime Provinces and Ontario, the farmers began to talk of the spirit of militarism and to express regret that a portion of the revenue of Canada was to be diverted to a useless purpose. In the Middle West, a stranger development occurred. There the people began to argue for a direct money contribution to the yearly expense of the British fleet, or the Imperial Navy as they termed it for the sake of their argument. Prominent Conservatives began to contend that Mr. Borden had made the mistake of his political career in agreeing that the announced policy of the Government was satisfactory. Influenced either by a desire for political advantage, or by a genuine feeling that a direct contribution of money or ships was necessary, these leading Conservatives complained that the party's position has been prejudiced by Mr. Borden's precipitate commendation of Sir Wilfrid's position. At the present moment it would seem that while the Government's following is nearly unanimous, the Conservative camp is in confusion. When the matter comes up for decision in a fortnight, almost anything may happen. While the Liberal ship is apparently riding the seas in tranquil fashion, the Conservative ship is plainly tossed about on angry waves which indicate a possible shipwreck.



PERHAPS the most outstanding feature of the contest will be the test of leadership on both sides. When the smoke clears away and the battle is decided, General Laurier and General Borden will have greater reputations or less. Sir Wilfrid has the advantage in this respect. The leader of a party in power finds it easier to preserve

discipline than the leader of an Opposition. His lieutenants are named and are bound to him by closer ties. They are cabinet ministers with greater responsibilities to their leader than

the lieutenants of an Opposition. Sir Wilfrid, the general of the Government side of the House, will probably have his followers well in hand throughout the struggle. Very few of them will disobey orders. On the other hand, Mr. R. L. Borden will have greater difficulties in enforcing like discipline. Never having led his party to victory, he has less prestige, less firmness of touch. The leader of an Opposition, unless he is an ex-cabinet minister, has always doubters in his ranks who make cohesion and a united front a difficult matter. When prominent Conservatives, such as the Premier of Manitoba and the Premier of New Brunswick, openly doubt the wisdom of Mr. Borden's present position, he will find it difficult to keep his following at Ottawa from getting out of hand. He may overcome these difficulties and come out of the conflict more firmly seated in the Conservative leadership. Then again, there may be a different result.

While it is too early to forecast what will happen, it is not too early to indicate the seriousness of the political situation and to direct public attention to it. The drama will be interesting, whether it develops into a tragedy or a comedy.



ONE of the great questions which must shortly be decided by the Canadian people is that of canal development. It is the most pressing phase of the transportation question. The building of the National Transcontinental is progressing apace; the Canadian Northern Railway is spreading through Ontario and across British Columbia; the surveys for the Hudson's Bay Railway have been made and the building of that line practically decided upon. This eliminates the railway problem from the list of pressing questions. The deepening of the St. Lawrence canals some years ago fulfilled for a period all the pressing needs of the country so far as canals were concerned. With the development of the grain trade in the West, however, there has come a new canal problem. It has resolved itself practically into the question, "Shall the Government build the Georgian Bay Canal or shall it build a new and deeper Welland Canal?"

This canal problem will be discussed at greater length in next week's issue. In the meantime it may be said that both projects have their enthusiastic supporters and advocates. It is announced from London that Sir Robert Perks has abandoned his candidature in a British constituency and is coming to Canada to devote his time to the advocacy of the Georgian Bay Canal. He will be supported in his campaign by a number of contractors all anxious to see the Dominion Government enter upon another spending campaign similar to the National Transcontinental. He will also be supported by a large number of people in Ottawa and Montreal who believe that the Georgian Bay Canal would be a tremendous aid to the development of the district lying between Lake Nipissing and the Port of Montreal.

Sir Robert will not, however, have it all his own way. There are those who believe the Georgian Bay project to be too heavy an undertaking in this stage of our development. They will argue that it will be better to spend twenty-five million dollars on a new Welland Canal than one hundred and fifty million dollars on a Georgian Bay Canal. They will claim that the success of a new Welland Canal with seven locks instead of twenty-four is absolutely certain and that the practicability of the Georgian Bay Canal via Lake Nipissing to the Ottawa River, is problematical. The steamship interests will be divided, while the railways will probably oppose both proposals. A great mass of statistics and detailed information will be laid before the public for their consideration.

Canada, just as much a private business corporation, should not