

ELECTIONS BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR

Premier Meighen Makes Expected Announcement; Attacks Farmers' Stand; Makes Tariff the Issue; Sir George E. Foster and Hon. R. W. Wigmores Said to be Among Those to Quit Cabinet; Sir J. D. Hazen and R. B. Bennett Named as Possibilities for Government

(Canadian Press Despatch.)

London, Ont., Sept. 1.—Right Hon. Arthur Meighen, prime minister, will recommend early dissolution of the Canadian House of Commons and a general election before the new year. This was his message to the people of London and to the people of Canada, delivered before an audience of some 3,000 people in the Grand Opera House tonight.

The announcement, which had been awaited with anxiety by all sections of the dominion, came as a surprise to all but a few of the prime minister's hearers. But when the premier announced that he considered it the proper thing to recommend early dissolution and a general election, applause rang through the theatre.

Redistribution could not be carried out within a reasonable time, the prime minister stated. The census returns would not be complete, it had been announced, until December and that would mean another twenty months or so of indecision with regard to tariff matters.

The Tariff Problem.

Canada could not get settled down to business unless the tariff problem was settled. The real challenge to the government, he said, came from the Farmers' party, which demanded free trade. That their policy was wrong, he was certain, and he was equally certain that it would be proven wrong by developments.

A revision of the tariff in Canada was due and overdue. To decide the principle of the tariff was the big, imperative question before the people of Canada today.

"Until they do decide it," declared the premier, "we cannot have tariff stability, we cannot have business stability, we cannot have confidence, we cannot have full employment, we cannot have health and growth and vitality."

"Until we know whether the people want a protective tariff or whether they don't, no tariff is secure. Either the opposition platform adopted in convention and set down in black and white, either it or the Farmers' platform means beyond all dispute the overthrow of the historic policy of this country."

The Premier's Address.

Dealing with the outlay for defence purposes, Premier Meighen said that was an issue and no man could make it so. Canada was spending less capital for this than any other nation. It cost Canada \$2.15 per head against the bill of \$18.13 in the United States. Australia was \$6.15, New Zealand's, \$5.82. Defence by land, sea and air cost Great Britain \$2.36 and other countries higher still. For military militia defence Canada paid less than other countries of her size. The nucleus of a militia was essential, if Canada was not to be helpless in the face of an aggression until it was too late.

The tariff policy of Canada was a real issue today, however. For forty-five years Canada had enjoyed a protective tariff. That protective tariff had been maintained through the throes of depression. It was required to raise the necessary revenue. Today it was necessary for both protection and revenue. Canada had progressed by this plan. In the face of difficulties there had been progress. The foundations of a great country had been well and truly laid.

Sixteen Per Cent.

This had not all been accomplished by insistence on a high protective tariff. For years back Canada's tariff had ranged around sixteen per cent, on the total of goods imported; today it was less than fifteen per cent. Our tariff on dutiable goods alone averaged under 2 per cent, the lowest since 1876. The prime minister doubted if this was even higher than that of Great Britain, under the tariff which had just passed the House of Commons. The men who talked of the tariff of Canada as a high tariff, especially if he had maintained a higher himself—as a humbug.

Now the world was reeling from the shock of war; nations were struggling to adjust themselves to new conditions. Every competing country was defending itself by higher tariff, striving to hold its own population and establish its own markets surer at home and thus enable the battle for wider world markets.

Faces Competition.

Production on a large scale and at a low price was their aim. That was the competition Canada faced. The United States had sold Canada goods at the rate of \$773,136,975 annually for five years, and only bought half as much in return. And the United States had just erected a new tariff wall to keep out Canadian and other products. That tariff wall imperilled our export business. A few years ago Canada had accepted the United States offer of free wheat and flour, but war embargoes had interfered and the reciprocal arrangements had been effective only a few months when the "new barrage" was directed against Canadian produce reaching the United States markets.

A tax of thirty-five cents against wheat and twenty cents against flour had been placed against Canada. Barriers had been placed against the export of potatoes.

No Spirit of Hostility.

Three years ago an agreement regarding fisheries had been reached and six weeks ago it had been cancelled and all the old barriers renewed. The Prime Minister said he spoke these words in no spirit of hostility. The United States had every right to pursue this course if it saw fit. But Canada had every right also to safeguard her industrial system, and that safeguard lay in a tariff system made by the Canadian people and for the Canadian people. "That system must not rest on the insecure foundations of arrangements with the United States," declared the Premier. "The language I use interprets the conduct of great leaders of both parties through almost all of our history."

"I believe it is the overwhelming sentiment of Canadians today," he declared. A challenge to this policy, said Mr. Meighen, came from the official opposi-

tion under Hon. Mackenzie King. It came "with muffled drums and an uncertain chorus" and none knew what was their song or what they intended to do. The prime minister quoted from the Liberal platform, adopted at their 1917 national convention, and said he put on record the question, "Does Mackenzie King stand pledged to put that platform in effect if returned to power?" That question, admitted of only two answers.

The Free List.

"But that convention platform (of placing on the free list nineteen classes of articles, including foodstuffs, farm implements and machinery, lumber of every kind and increasing the preference at once to fifty per cent and substantially reducing the tariff which they themselves had made on all clothing, boots and shoes and articles of general consumption) in effect and you add enormously to unemployment. As it is, we have far more than enough; but we have the least for high office because of a country that went through the war."

That platform, declared Mr. Meighen, would cripple Canadian industries. The wiping away of the small barriers at the present effective would open Canadian markets to American goods.

If Mr. King answered "yes" his platform was unsound and un-Canadian. If he answered "no" he was convicted of bad faith and was therefore unfit for power. If he refused any answer then he was unfit for high office because he was lacking in frankness and candour. The challenge of the Liberals was not a serious challenge, however, said the prime minister. He doubted if that party would have a single candidate between Lake Superior and the Mountains.

The Farmers' Party.

The real challenge came from the Farmers' party, born in western Canada, whose set purpose is to reverse the tariff policy of Canada. That party had grown to unexpected strength and in Alberta it had registered a triumph by almost 10,000 majority. The facts could not be ignored. The main thing was to accept their significance and get up and face them. The breath of life of that party, Mr. Meighen said, was free trade. It could mean nothing else.

All these men were protectionists," the prime minister said, "but they all had to listen to silly chatter of demagogues telling them they were the creatures of privilege and the allies of the rich."

A farmer movement, Mr. Meighen declared, had grown to full maturity. It had demonstrated its strength, but these men of the Farmers' party were wrong and time would prove them so. "There are those who refuse to be alarmed," said the prime minister. "They say, 'look at Mr. Cramer. He is already hedging on the doctrine that he has preached for years—free trade. He says it is a fiscal paradise but he does not want paradise too soon.' Very true, I know he is talking nonsense. But that kind of movement is bigger than its leader and their organizations won't be betrayed."

The prime minister said he supposed that every farmer elected would be pledged to their platform and his resignation would be in hand as security.

The Alberta Liberal party in January, 1919, had adopted the whole Farmers' platform and declared that Canada should strike for free trade with both England and the United States. Prominent engineers in the Liberal opposition had just got through declaring that the farmer platform and their own (on tariff matters) were the same.

"A revision of our tariff is due and overdue," said Mr. Meighen. We must decide our tariff policy. That is the big, imperative thing facing the people of Canada today. And until they decide, and we get tariff stability, we cannot have business stability. Until we know whether the people want a protective tariff or whether they don't, no tariff is secure."

"When should the contest come?" asked Mr. Meighen, adding that it must be faced. He did not want to be responsible for another year and a half without dependable revision. If the voice of Medicine Hat was to be the voice of Canada somebody else besides himself would have to give it effect.

"What about redistribution?" he asked his audience. If a redistribution bill could be passed at a special session without involving a long delay then a special session ought to be called to try and pass such a bill. "Though I have never pledged to submit such a measure and have argued that the need of redistribution was an important reason among others why the present parliament should not be prematurely dissolved." But, he added, he could see no reasonable possibility of having such a task accomplished.

Complete census returns, as required by law, could not be assembled before December 1. Even could the census be complete and parliament be called by November 1, there would be no possibility of being through with the session by December and as the new parliament would have to meet in early spring that would mean a mid-winter campaign.

REPORTS ABOUT THE CABINET

Ottawa, Sept. 1.—Premier Meighen's announcement that there will be an election before New Year's Day means a busy fall for all politicians. Before parliament is dissolved the premier must reconstruct his cabinet, and he will fill the nine vacancies now existing in the senate. All parties must look to their organization throughout the country and lay their plans for securing the sinews of war. The West York by-election was called recently for October 6, but when parliament dissolves the by-election date will be cancelled automatically. Registration begins tomorrow and it is thought that this will be allowed to go on as it would have to be done for a general election in any case.

Strenuous Campaign.

The premier will have until December 17 or thereabouts, the date when the election is expected, the most strenuous time of his whole life. He has to reconstruct his cabinet, and he is credited with a willingness to make a thorough job of it. Making a clean sweep, however, is easier to talk about than do, and he will have to deal with followers in the House of Commons, who have followed him loyally with the hope of a cabinet portfolio dangling just before them. To them a few brief months of glory seem worth while, especially as an election cannot wipe out the honorable which would displace the miter, as a prefix to their names until death would them part. But these national, personal ambitions, the premier will not consider if he can obtain some men better known to the public in order to make a better showing before the public. Already they are beginning to gather. The coming of L. J. Gauthier, member for St. Hyacinthe, caused comment. When the premier gets here from Toronto he will find the first phalanx all ready for him. Then there are the office seekers.

Nine Senatorial Vacancies.

There are nine senatorial vacancies, and there may be an appointment of a Canadian plenipotentiary to Washington. Among those who are expected to leave the cabinet are Sir George Foster, Hon. J. D. Reid, Senator Blondin, Hon. J. A. Calder, Hon. C. J. Doherty, Hon. C. C. Balguyne and Hon. Rupert W. Wigmores. Those who will stay are Sir Henry Drayton, Sir James Loughheed, Senator Robertson, Hon. F. B. McDermid, Dr. Toimie, and Hon. Hugh Guthrie.

The decision for an election is a sore point with most of the members. Though the premier did pledge his word not to have an election, he showed such seeming anxiety to get their opin-

ions that a number left his presence confident that he would not call an election.

Their loss of \$4,000 will be a grievance which cannot be ventilated publicly, and some have now made a virtue of necessity since the decision became known today and are saying that an election this fall was a foregone conclusion. The announcement that the census figures would not be ready until December is a surprise here as twice the enumerators were employed in 1921 than there were in 1911, and then most of the returns were in by September.

Keeping the West Down.

This seems ground for a statement heard more than once tonight that the desire to hold a fall session was more responsible for the delay in the census than a delay in the census being the cause of bringing on the election. Some "inside information" may have been obtained because Premier Meighen has evidently decided that it would be better to keep the west down to its present representation since it is going solidly against him, and keep the eastern seats as they are.

As soon as parliament dissolves Premier Meighen will make a tour of Canada. He will not tarry much in western Canada except in his own seat of Portage La Prairie, which he will contest, and the larger cities. British Columbia will be looked after, Ontario will hear a number of addresses, Quebec a few, and the maritime provinces some more.

Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, Liberal leader, intended to leave shortly for the maritime provinces. He will probably keep to his plan. The farmers and labor men will get busy everywhere. Premier Meighen will be accompanied by some of his new cabinet members. It is said that an effort is being made to get Sir Douglas Hazen, chief justice of the Supreme Court of New Brunswick, and R. B. Bennett, of Calgary. Mr. Bennett is a native of Hopewell Cape (N. B.).

King Welcomes Contest. (Canadian Press Despatch.) Ottawa, Sept. 1.—"I think the prime

minister should have made his announcement before," declared Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, Liberal leader, in an interview with the Canadian Press tonight. Mr. King's statement was in reference to the announcement of a general election before the new year.

"I think we should have had a general election two years ago," Mr. King added. "Ever since I was entrusted with the leadership of the Liberal party I have consistently advocated the desirability of a general election. I am glad that the government has at least been compelled to listen to the voice of the people and to concede a fundamental right denied for the last couple of years."

Paper Companies Tied Up.

Augusta, Me., Sept. 1.—It is announced that the affairs of the Cushman Paper Co. and the Kennebec Paper Co. are to be conducted by a committee of creditors, to whom \$1,500,000 is due. The Cushman Co. owes \$800,000 and the other \$700,000.

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