

THE SESSION OF PARLIAMENT IN REVIEW.

Third Year of Borden Government Emphasizes Fundamental Party Issues.

THE third session of the twelfth Parliament of Canada ended on June 12th, after 103 days of actual sitting and after practically three years of Conservative rule under Messrs. Borden, Rogers, Pelletier, Hughes, White and the Interests they stand for.

The developments of the session, the public issues discussed, the positive as well as the negative legislative results, the economic and political conditions of the country at the close of the session are all significant of the difference between Liberalism and Conservatism, between Laurier and Borden, between courageous and wide-visioned statesmanship and mere political expediency in the scramble to gain and keep administrative power.

A Perspective of Three Sessions.

The session itself was perhaps not so spectacular as the preceding session with its long continued and strenuous fight over the naval issue and the closure, but to a close observer of fundamental political issues the past session was even more important and significant. Broadly speaking it may be said that the first session of the present Parliament exposed the innate weaknesses of the Nationalist-Conservative cabinet and the paralyzing effect of the conflicting interests and conflicting pre-election promises which combined to bring the Unholy Alliance into power. It also cleared the slate of the sectional and creedal misrepresentation which had been worked for years against Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his Government, in connection with such issues as the Ne Temere Decree, the school question in Manitoba, Oriental immigration in British Columbia, flag waving in Ontario and Bourassaism in Quebec.

The second session developed and defined the big issue of responsible Government on which Liberalism is founded. It emphasized reactionary Toryism under the present regime. The naval issue was at bottom the issue of responsible Government and of the autonomous development of Canada as a self-governing nation within the Empire. The centralizing tendencies of the Borden Government were evidenced in the contribution proposals and in the desire to obtain arbitrary control by the executive of the funds voted by Parliament, as instanced in the case of the Highways Aid Bill and other measures. The forcing through of closure by unconstitutional and brute force methods was a culminating effort of reactionary Toryism during the second session.

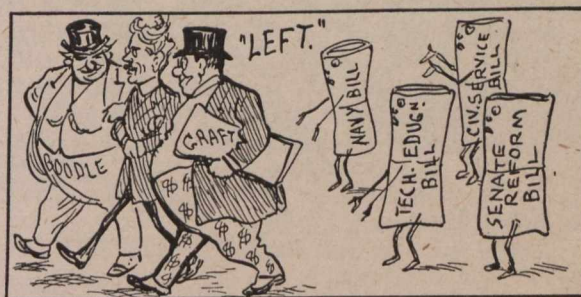
The third session which ended last month, while still further developing the moral of the first two sessions and the party tendencies, developed also in clearer outline the dominant issue of democracy versus autocracy—the issue of the masses of the people as opposed to the classes; the issue of Government of the people, by the people and for the people, as opposed to the issue of Government of the Interests, by the Interests and for the Interests. Underlying the long debates on the tariff, on the Canadian Northern Aid legislation, the National Transcontinental and the

administration of the Labor department, that was the issue in one form or another which was always at stake.

In broad outline that gives the outstanding developments of the three sessions. It demonstrates the bad politics of sacrificing fundamental principles of honest and courageous government to mere political expediency. It gives the right perspective for a detailed review of the events of the past session.

Promise and Performance.

The session opened with the confession in the Speech from the Throne that business was in a depressed condition; but there was no promise of any legislation to meet conditions arising from the restriction of trade or from the continued increase in the cost of living—no promise of any legislation designed to remedy urban congestion and unemployment or to meet the needs of the agricultural industry as voiced by the deputation which waited upon the Government shortly before Parliament opened, representing the organized farmers of the Dominion who sought a freer and more profitable exchange of their products for what they had to buy from the protected manufacturers. The only legislation promised in the Speech from the Throne was redistribution in the Commons, an increase of western representation in the Senate, Railway Act consolidation, a Civil Service bill, a bill amending legislation in regard to Trust and Loan Companies, a bill to give effect to the recommendation of the International Conference on Safety of Life at Sea, and finally the appropriations for carrying on the administration for another year.



Of the promised legislation, redistribution, the bills respecting trust and loan companies and safety at sea and the money appropriations were passed. All these were matters connected with the routine administration of Government rather than with constructive statesmanship. The consolidation of the Railway Act, which developed at once some opposition from the transportation interests, was left over for next session. The bill to re-adjust salaries and institute other reforms in the Civil Service was introduced only on the last day of the session, obviously merely with the intention of giving some appearance of keeping faith with the civil servants. For political reasons the Government thinks it better to leave until