

The Brain Browsers' Guide

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THE POLITICAL SITUATION

It is now practically certain Canada will see an election this Fall. The small majority in favor of Premier Borden's resolution for extension of parliament has rendered this almost inevitable and has also made it desirable. The parliamentary term expires October 7. The election will likely be held in September or October. The present parliament has outlived its term by one year. There are now 33 vacancies in the House of Commons at Ottawa, and the country is due for a redistribution of constituencies, by which the West will gain considerable in representation. The conscription bill has forced the issue. Heretofore the avoidance of an election was wise, even though the government had perhaps lost the confidence of the electorate, but that failure to maintain confidence was not on such vitally important matters as at present. A reasonably equitable coalition or a national government, as has been suggested, would likely have got over the difficulty and avoided the turmoil, recriminations and expense of an election.

The present situation is due to a failure of party government, that fetish too long worshipped in this country. It has failed us at the time of greatest national stress we have ever faced. The bitter partisanship engendered through years of partyism has been fatal to harmony. Personal ambition and conceit have been developed more highly than national patriotism. Subservience to this partyism at Ottawa has retarded the development of politicians until the thought of the country is far in advance of them. The example set by Ottawa is bad. There seems nothing for it now but an election. And it is to be hoped that many of the party worshippers will be left at home. The conscription measure is the first consideration, for clearly the present government could not expect to enforce such a measure. Conscription as limited by this bill is decidedly unfair, and any enforcement of it until after an election should not be attempted. It conscripts flesh and blood only and omits to conscript wealth. It calls for little or no sacrifice from those who benefit most from war and at a time when great sacrifice should be made by all. In brief, the suggestion is what so many so-called conscriptionists advocate—conscription for the other man. The people of this country would favor conscription of men were some reasonable attempt made to go about doing it in a spirit of equitable sacrifice and to properly conscript wealth at the same time. Otherwise it is establishing the worship of mammon, putting gold above human life; it is unfair, unjust and undemocratic.

But while conscription of men is the main issue, it is not the only one, and it will not be sufficient alone to win many men their seats in the West. In Western Canada the necessity for economic reforms remains as great as ever it did and it must play an outstanding part in this election. Neither the government nor the eastern official Liberals can be expected to give sympathetic consideration to economic demands. Their record shows that. The western Liberals have the opportunity of their lives and might possibly secure a balance of power. They are to meet in Winnipeg in August to decide their course and adopt a platform. If they separate themselves entirely from the pandering eastern section of the party, link themselves with the independent progressives and make their platform conform with the progressive spirit of the West, they are certain to carry the entire West. Already in many places western Liberals are signifying

their intention of taking this stand. It is the path of safety for liberalism, for independence and for national progress.

UNREST IN THE CENTRAL EMPIRES

Germany is now passing through the most serious political revolution since the commencement of the war. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg has been forced to resign, the Reichstag has been in ferment, there has been a struggle for political supremacy between the forces in power and more liberal influences, and a new chancellor, Dr. George Michaelis, conceded to be favorable to the former party, has been appointed. Michaelis supports the submarine campaign as at present carried on. The refusal of the Reichstag to vote another war credit until a definite pronouncement on certain war aims of the military party was made precipitated the trouble. This revolution has been led by the Catholic clerical party, possibly with the approval of the Pope, and apparently with the approval of the Austrian Emperor, for it came just after a visit of Erzberger, the leader of the clerical party, to Austria. The clerical party has always been a kind of central party, conservative, and by its support of Imperialistic aims has managed to offset to a large degree the agitation promoted by the socialistic element. Now comes word that the Reichstag has adopted a resolution favoring peace without annexations or indemnities by a vote of 214 to 116. That would seem to indicate that the hopelessness of their position is to some extent dawning upon the representatives of the people in the Reichstag. But it must be remembered that that body is mainly a forum or chamber for discussion. The real power of decision in Germany has always rested with the Bundesrat, a body always largely made up of the kings, princes and nobility of the 26 states of which Germany is composed. In that body there are 61 votes, of which Prussia has 17, and the Kaiser rules these. He may dissolve the Reichstag on the approval of the Bundesrat. The Chancellor is responsible to him only and the various ministers do not act together as a cabinet but independently of each other and directly under the supervision of the Chancellor. Not only has the Reichstag no real voice in momentous decisions, but it is notoriously unrepresentative itself, since there has been practically no change in electoral methods since 1871.

A change of popular thought is evidenced by the Reichstag vote and the more or less constant press agitation tends to show a more distinct line of cleavage between the people and the rulers. The same is evident in Austria, which has managed to maintain a remarkable silence for a long time. That peculiar empire, made up of a large number of quite distinctive races, is now hearing insistent demands from certain elements for independence. Czechs, Ukrainians and Poles want their freedom. They probably foresee a great change coming and think now is the time to speak. All this bodes ill for Germany's dream of a central empire, stretching from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf. It is even stated that Erzberger, the leader of the Catholic party that has been forcing matters in the Reichstag, has been endeavoring to unite Roman Catholics in Switzerland, France and Italy in a peace move. If this be true it would indicate that these Churchmen believe in making hay while the sun shines. They see that either peace or revolution must come soon, and that the longer the war continues the greater will be the

influence of the socialistic elements in the revolution which is almost sure to follow.

What the outcome will be none can tell. Perhaps none can come until what happened at Petrograd happens in Berlin, but it is much less likely to happen in Berlin. The elimination of Bethmann-Hollweg, who saw the necessity of reform and tried to keep the peace by granting concessions to the popular clamor in the way of electoral reform, must only the sooner precipitate internal revolution and the sooner the better. The German Junkers, like all Junkers, no matter where found, are woefully inefficient at reading the signs of the times and making a true estimate of public opinion.

EUROPEAN CO-OPERATION

The stability of co-operative movements in many parts of Europe during the terrible strain of war is not only a source of immense satisfaction to all true co-operators, but an assurance that the co-operative movement is based on the natural laws of progressive human evolution. When other institutions have been swept by storm, and many mutual societies have been broken up by mobilization; when trade unions have had to sacrifice many things they have striven half a century for—limitation of working hours, exclusion of women from factories, even the right to strike; when even Socialism has renounced the fundamental articles of its program in nearly all European countries, co-operative societies have increased and prospered even more during the war than preceding it. Scarcity of provisions and high prices have forced economy and driven business to co-operative stores, and the experience of these stores has been invaluable in many cases in assisting equitable distribution. No country has realized this more than Germany. Belgian refugees formed co-operative societies, and the impulse of co-operation in Russia has been greater than in any other country. In France, co-operative endeavor reached a high pitch, and its voice has been heard in government councils. In nearly every country of Europe consumers have found it advantageous to get together and establish a "fair-price," which is equivalent to saying common justice should dominate economic management. This is vastly superior to the "free competition" which has built up so many large fortunes in nearly all countries since the war began.

Co-operative societies have tried first of all to prevent the shortage of this or that article, by warning their members not to lay in large stocks and so create great inequality through stupid panic. They have wisely counselled people to do without those provisions which are getting scarce, and to substitute others which are comparatively speaking, plentiful. And, when in spite of these precautions, the supply still remains insufficient, they have reduced the quantity deliverable to each member so as to regulate the demand in accordance with the existing stock. They have thereby succeeded to a considerable extent in checking the advance in prices. Hence co-operation, which always buries deepest its roots in the soil of adversity has met with assistance as well as with great difficulties during the war. Its object is to provide for all its members to the best of its ability, rather than to realize maximum dividends, and this is giving the movement an impetus which should help to assure co-operators of still greater success when the hour of great national re-organization takes place in all European countries.

Herbert C. Hoover, the new food controller of the United States, says that on flour alone the people of the United States