



Canada, *the War* and *the Political Parties*

AN ADDRESS delivered by the

Hon. Robert Rogers

(Dominion Minister of Public Works)

at First Annual Convention Banquet
of the Conservative Party of Manitoba
at Royal Alexandra Hotel, Winnipeg,
on Tuesday, 18th day of July, 1916



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MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN:—

Allow me to acknowledge with deep feelings of appreciation the compliment implied in the warmth of your reception this evening. I am indeed no stranger to a warm reception at the hands of those assembled. For twenty-five long years and more it has ever been my pleasure to meet your ringing cheers whenever and wherever I have had the opportunity to present myself.

May I congratulate you on being so fortunate as to have been able to secure the continuation of the services of our good friend, the president, for the coming year. I am glad to know that you give such evidence of your sound judgment in recognizing that which we who have lived in the city for a number of years have long since recognized in our worthy president—those sterling qualities which so eminently fit him for the position which he occupies.

It is true, for reasons within the common knowledge of all, that we have not had many opportunities for political meetings since the outbreak of the war. During that period the government has been called upon to meet an emergency the like of which no government has ever been called upon to meet in Canada before. We had no precedent to guide us, for never in all our history had we such conditions forced upon us. The government, however, took hold of the situa-

tion determinedly and fearlessly. We recognized that Canada was British to the core, and we believed then, as we believe now, that all loyal Canadians would indorse our every action in taking the necessary steps to aid in the protection of our Empire and securing victory for her flag and our flag. We recognized that in such a crisis assistance promptly given was doubly valuable and therefore acted without a moment's delay.

Taking that proper position which Canada, the great colony of the Empire, should occupy—that of being the first to lead in our offer of assistance to the motherland—not only did we act quickly, but we felt there should be no two opinions in Canada that we should act generously and rely upon the support of the people to indorse our generous measures of assistance. It is quite true that Canada was not prepared for war. We are not a warlike people. We are a great industrial, peace-loving people.

It is, however, undoubtedly true that we should have been better prepared than we were, and had the feelings and policy which you represent been allowed to prevail, we would have been much better prepared than we were. But on that score the government have no apologies to make. They believed that there was danger. They believed that danger was grave and serious, hence our naval proposals, as made to parliament, which were there met with the following argument made by Sir Wilfrid Laurier: "I charge upon

the administration, sir, that they have submitted this measure to us under false pretences, and I do not consider that observation too strong. I charge upon the administration that they put into the mouth of His Royal Highness the Governor-General assertions which were absolutely unfounded in fact, when they placed in the speech from the throne the assertion that a condition of things exists in Great Britain which makes it imperative that the naval forces of the Empire should at once be strengthened. I say there is not the shadow of foundation for such an assertion. There is one fact in the situation which I think shows that there is no intention on the part of Germany to attack England, and that fact is the German Emperor. The German Emperor is undoubtedly one of the great men of the present age. By intellect, by character, by moral fibre, he has shown himself wonderfully endowed. In the first years of his reign some of his utterances sent a shiver through those who had the peace of the world at heart. Many believed that he was, perhaps, hankering for the glamor of military glory. But, as he advanced in years, and as crisis after crisis came, his patient influence was always directed towards peace. And the day may come when, like his illustrious uncle, our late King, he may be called 'The Peace Maker.' "

On this line of argument parliament was kept in session for days and months by Laurierism until the government were obliged to bring down a closure

measure, which had the intended effect of closing their mouths insofar as the House of Commons was concerned. However, the irresponsible majority of that day in the Upper Chamber, which represented Laurierism in Canada, had the power under our present form of government to say that the free will of Canada's representatives, as expressed in the House of Commons, should not be allowed to prevail, hence the defeat of our proposal, which was so gratifying to the German people as is evidenced by the following quotation from Germany's leading press:

"Whatever may be decided upon later, the actual decision of the Canadian senate means at any rate a heavy moral and material loss for the defence of the Empire, for Mr. Borden's promise has been foolishly enough counted on. His offer made an enormous impression on the whole world. Mr. Churchill pointed out this fact especially in the well known memorandum of the admiralty. This impression will not only be destroyed, but people will everywhere obtain the conviction that England cannot depend on such help from her colonies. 'By rivals and enemies,' says the Morning Post today, 'the decision will be eagerly welcomed. By friends it will be regarded as ominous.' The impression must inevitably be created that the solidarity of the Empire is a myth, and that those powers which would like to see the overthrow of British naval supremacy need not be discouraged in their efforts by the thought that their challenge

would be met by the united resources of the Mother Country and of every one of the daughter states."

Here we have the whole story through which we have suffered so much, and through which the greatest colony of the Empire is obliged in this one spot in the present struggle to take second place to our sister colonies of Australia and New Zealand. When the history of Canada's efforts, of Canada's share and Canada's part in this great war has been written, its darkest pages will tell the story of the great crime that was committed by this action on the part of Laurierism, both against Canada and against the Empire.

The Canadian people realize today our great loss in being prevented from giving effect to that policy, which, had we been able to carry it through, would have meant so much in this solemn hour, not alone to Canada, but to the Empire as well. We must, however, thank Heaven that Laurierism, that has ever opposed every proposal or move that was ever designed to bind in closer bonds of union our great Dominion and the Mother Country (as the long line of reports of the Imperial Conferences, as well as the defeat of our naval proposals, will prove), will in future find little if any support among the loyal people of our Dominion, all of whom, be they Liberal or Conservative, have now discovered how rotten were the props of Laurierism on which so many of our citizens have been leaning in the past. These same

citizens stand among the first today in assisting to hurl the truth respecting Canada's duty in this solemn crisis into our every surroundings.

Since the outbreak of the war the government have remained steadfast in discharging their great responsibilities with determination. We stand by that position today. We have endeavored to carry out all these great responsibilities in a manner worthy of the Canadian people. Up until the present giving little or no attention to the political sniping attitude of Laurierism, believing as we do that the loyal Canadian people recognize the very grave and heavy responsibility which rests upon the government in the fulfilling of Canada's duty and the carrying out of Canada's part in our great struggle, the end of which no man can yet foresee. All this, however, appears to be of little interest to Laurierism, for who will dare say that since the day war was declared Laurierism had not been exploiting our unfortunate war conditions for political advantage? What else did Laurierism mean when they offered their fierce objection to our bill extending the franchise to the bravest and the best of our sons who have gone forward, pressing their services upon their King and their country in the defence of human liberty? Laurierism argued for days and for nights in the House of Commons when this measure was up for consideration, that a citizen who gives up his home, gives up his job, goes into training and faces death for the love

of his country, should be deprived of the right to say how that country is to be governed. When this bill finally passed the House of Commons and passed on to the Senate, it was so mutilated by the irresponsible majority as represented in the Upper Chamber to make it almost unworkable and of doubtful value. To accomplish this crime, it was necessary first of all for that body to set at defiance the law and the constitution of our country, under the British North America Act, which provided for the appointment of senators to meet the growing conditions of Western Canada. The obvious reason for this action on the part of this irresponsible majority was to continue as long as possible the control of Laurierism in Canada. Kind Providence has, however, now put an end to the further practice of crimes against the Canadian people from this quarter.

What loyal citizen will say this war can be carried on to a successful conclusion without money and without means, yet Laurierism declared by their voice and vote in parliament that we must not have the necessary money for this great task. But worse still is the general political sniping policy that is being actively carried on by Laurierism. During the past two years under a supposed truce, under the protection of the white flag, Laurierism has by every contemptible means imaginable, endeavored to subject the government of the day to the most dishonorable and dishonest misrepresentation of our true con-

ditions. Not satisfied with this, they still further exploit war conditions, in that they take advantage of the absence of hundreds of thousands of our best citizens who are serving their King and country in defence of priceless liberty, as well as saving the skins of those of us that remain at home. This obviously was regarded as a favorable moment for Laurierism to return, like a dog to his vomit, to the only means by which they have ever had any political success in Canada—that of stirring up race against race, creed against creed, language against language.

While all this organized exploitation of war conditions for political advantage is being carried on by Laurierism the government have remained steadfast in the carrying out of the greatest task that has ever fallen to the lot of any government in Canada to deal with. Under the conditions through which we were called upon to take our share and our part in the great war struggle of the past two years, one would have thought that under these trying conditions some semblance of common decency, some semblance of loyalty to Canada at all events, would have characterized the course of Laurierism, but such has not been the case. Well may we say in this trying hour for Canada that “would to God that we could find, in Laurierism, at least some of that same principle and truth, some of that same loyalty to British connection, which were the ever-guiding stars of Liberalism under Brown, Mackenzie and Blake.”

But let me repeat what I said at the outset, that which no man can deny, that Laurierism has ever opposed every move and every proposal that was designed to bind together in closer bonds of union our Great Dominion and the Mother Country. Laurierism has had a measure of success in their operations in the past when they have been able to carry on their work of spreading their poisonous gases from behind their favorite lines of torres vedras. For the moment they are attempting to carry on their operations from behind the shield of the Nationalist school—a school for which Laurierism is entirely responsible, as acknowledged and declared through the press and elsewhere by the ablest members of that school, who publicly assert before the world their position and publish, as they have, in the following words, that which Laurierism has not attempted and dare not attempt to deny:

“Even suppose it be true that the Nationalists’ resistance be inspired from hatred of England, at what school were we given such lessons of hatred and distrust? At the school of the Liberal party under the supreme inspiration and the immediate direction of Mr. Laurier.”

No province and no people should better understand our true condition than the good citizens of the Province of Manitoba. We have in the past had occasion to study Laurierism at the price of the great

loss and the great wrong which for years was practiced against us in the refusal of the late government to allow Manitoba to occupy a position of equality in the family of Provinces that form the Confederation of our Dominion.

I am sure we have not forgotten our great battles for our rights, and let me say that the proudest moment in my life, as a servant of the people of this Province, was that moment when I succeeded in breaking down in the House of Commons the last, the final and the determined efforts of Laurierism to further practice injustice to Manitoba. And let me tell you that the task was no easy one, by reason of the fact that we not only had to do battle in the House of Commons, but for years we had to do battle with an army of hirelings of Laurierism going about our own Province spreading misrepresentations in respect to Manitoba's just claim, and assisting the cause of Laurierism in practicing their crime of injustice against our Province.

Laurierism would like to repeat today this same line with their hired help in the great Province of Ontario, but, sir, they are handicapped in that they do not control the treasury out of which to pay their hirelings as they did in Manitoba, as is evinced by the fact that up to date the only two individuals in Ontario who are publicly known to be low enough and mean enough to lend themselves to the promotion of Laurierism in that Province are two men

whose names are known to you all—Johnston and Hawkes—a nice pair, of course, despised wherever they go, still more despised where they are best known, and are therefore well qualified to fill positions in the forefront of Laurierism, as it is understood in Canada.

In a word, sir, throughout all our difficulties of the past two years in Canada, who will attempt or who will dare deny that Laurierism has not shown a greater interest in piffing political scandal than they have in our war conditions, while on the other hand the government, night and day, have endeavored with whatever energy and whatever ability God has given them to fulfill their duty to our Dominion. It is now just nearly two years since the government served notice on the world that Canada would take her share and her part of the great struggle in the wide field of conflict. Our gallant sons who have come forward by the hundreds of thousands have also served notice that they too are with the Empire, and all these notices contain the clause that Canada's share and Canada's part will not be finished until the last shot of the war has been fired. And I am sure we are all proud tonight to know and to realize that the pulse of our great young nation is beating faster and stronger by reason of the fact that we have now 400,000 of the bravest and best of our men in the King's uniform, and we hope in the near future that this number will be increased to half a

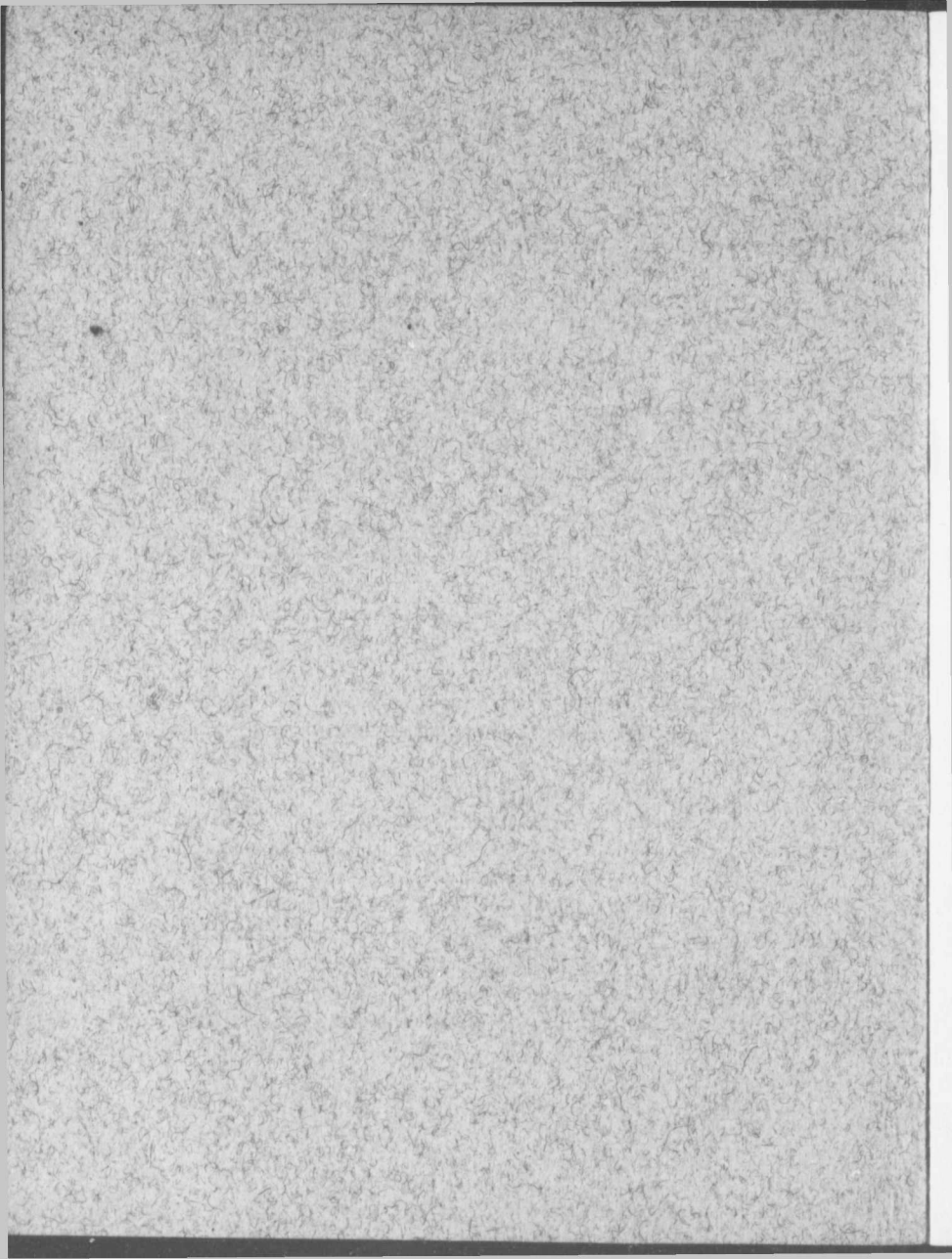
million or more. With this force, with this power, and with this strength, in Canada's name we march forward to do battle against German militarism and German covetousness of our great Empire. We propose to destroy Germany's every hope of ever being able to turn Canada into an overseas Alsace-Lorraine. If, in addition to this great task, it is now necessary to do battle at home against Laurierism, thank Heaven we are ready, and full of confidence. It will not be to the school of Laurierism, whose principal share and part in our present great struggle is their effort to attempt to appropriate for political advantage the reflected glory of our gallant soldiers—it will not be to the uniforms of the school of Laurierism, that bear no mark or stain of dust or blood, that the Cross of Honor will be attached by the loyal people of Canada, representing all races, all creeds, and all nationalities. The Canadian people can be depended upon in the present crisis to remain true to the grand old traditional policy for which we have ever stood, that of unity of purpose among all the races of our common country, through which we will build up a happy, a prosperous and a united Canada.

We expect to win this war so completely that it will be the last for generations, and the work of the present government will not be finished until we have fully developed our "After the War" programme—a programme that will mean much for Canada, and especially so for Western Canada. The

lines upon which the peaceful development of the world will proceed will be fixed in the first few months after the signing of peace, and the present government are bound to secure for Canada our full share and, depend upon it, Western Canada will not take second place to any other portion of our Dominion, but on the contrary will be the show-window of attraction, and to this end we are making painstaking preparations.

Who knows better than the present government what it is to suffer from unpreparedness? Unpreparedness for war cost us a large number of priceless lives and millions in treasure. By the removal today of our great barrier in the Upper Chamber, the government can be depended upon to see to it that Canada will not lose again through unpreparedness for the coming blessing of peace. We are preparing now for a great after-the-war immigration which with preparation is bound to flow to our ports. We must attract the immigrant as never before. We have in the three prairie Provinces the greatest opportunities for immigration that are to be found in any part of the civilized world, but a great responsibility rests on the government to see that the home-seeker is attracted as never before. We must provide means to make him happy and prosperous. We must provide, among other things, well-equipped demonstration farms on which the government can place thousands of our returned soldiers, who are desirous of making

agriculture their life work for the future. We must provide abundance of room on those farms for the stream of war-worn European immigrants with agricultural inclinations which will be sure to come to us. When they have given evidence of their suitability for farm work, we must assist them to get properly located that they may at once become producers. The government will be ready in every desirable country in the civilized world to attract desirable immigrants to our shore. Then as to industry, the government have another great responsibility to see that there will be no gap in our industrial activities at the signing of peace. The government must see to it that the wheels of development must whirl on. The government are already endeavoring to find out how much of the merchandise we have paid others to make for us can be made profitably by our own people. What the government asks of the people is to assist in the task of getting ready. We believe now is the time to commence getting ready. We also believe this to be Canada's greatest opportunity of a generation, and perhaps of a century. We are determined that our preparations for peace will be intelligent and earnest, so that in a few years we will be better off than ever before, believing, as we do, that a few millions spent on intelligent preparation for peace will enable our country and her people to reap untold millions through the long future.





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the administration, sir, that they have submitted this measure to us under false pretences, and I do not consider that observation too strong. I charge upon the administration that they put into the mouth of His Royal Highness the Governor-General assertions which were absolutely unfounded in fact, when they placed in the speech from the throne the assertion that a condition of things exists in Great Britain which makes it imperative that the naval forces of the Empire should at once be strengthened. I say there is not the shadow of foundation for such an assertion. There is one fact in the situation which I think shows that there is no intention on the part of Germany to attack England, and that fact is the German Emperor. The German Emperor is undoubtedly one of the great men of the present age. By intellect, by character, by moral fibre, he has shown himself wonderfully endowed. In the first years of his reign some of his utterances sent a shiver through those who had the peace of the world at heart. Many believed that he was, perhaps, hankering for the glamor of military glory. But, as he advanced in years, and as crisis after crisis came, his patient influence was always directed towards peace. And the day may come when, like his illustrious uncle, our late King, he may be called 'The Peace Maker.' "

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whose names are known to you all—Johnston and Hawkes—a nice pair, of course, despised wherever they go, still more despised where they are best known, and are therefore well qualified to fill positions in the forefront of Laurierism, as it is understood in Canada.

In a word, sir, throughout all our difficulties of the past two years in Canada, who will attempt or who will dare deny that Laurierism has not shown a greater interest in piffing political scandal than they have in our war conditions, while on the other hand the government, night and day, have endeavored with whatever energy and whatever ability God has given them to fulfill their duty to our Dominion. It is now just nearly two years since the government served notice on the world that Canada would take her share and her part of the great struggle in the wide field of conflict. Our gallant sons who have come forward by the hundreds of thousands have also served notice that they too are with the Empire, and all these notices contain the clause that Canada's share and Canada's part will not be finished until the last shot of the war has been fired. And I am sure we are all proud tonight to know and to realize that the pulse of our great young nation is beating faster and stronger by reason of the fact that we have now 400,000 of the bravest and best of our men in the King's uniform, and we hope in the near future that this number will be increased to half a

million or more. With this force, with this power, and with this strength, in Canada's name we march forward to do battle against German militarism and German covetousness of our great Empire. We propose to destroy Germany's every hope of ever being able to turn Canada into an overseas Alsace-Lorraine. If, in addition to this great task, it is now necessary to do battle at home against Laurierism, thank Heaven we are ready, and full of confidence. It will not be to the school of Laurierism, whose principal share and part in our present great struggle is their effort to attempt to appropriate for political advantage the reflected glory of our gallant soldiers—it will not be to the uniforms of the school of Laurierism, that bear no mark or stain of dust or blood, that the Cross of Honor will be attached by the loyal people of Canada, representing all races, all creeds, and all nationalities. The Canadian people can be depended upon in the present crisis to remain true to the grand old traditional policy for which we have ever stood, that of unity of purpose among all the races of our common country, through which we will build up a happy, a prosperous and a united Canada.

We expect to win this war so completely that it will be the last for generations, and the work of the present government will not be finished until we have fully developed our "After the War" programme—a programme that will mean much for Canada, and especially so for Western Canada. The

lines upon which the peaceful development of the world will proceed will be fixed in the first few months after the signing of peace, and the present government are bound to secure for Canada our full share and, depend upon it, Western Canada will not take second place to any other portion of our Dominion, but on the contrary will be the show-window of attraction, and to this end we are making painstaking preparations.

Who knows better than the present government what it is to suffer from unpreparedness? Unpreparedness for war cost us a large number of priceless lives and millions in treasure. By the removal today of our great barrier in the Upper Chamber, the government can be depended upon to see to it that Canada will not lose again through unpreparedness for the coming blessing of peace. We are preparing now for a great after-the-war immigration which with preparation is bound to flow to our ports. We must attract the immigrant as never before. We have in the three prairie Provinces the greatest opportunities for immigration that are to be found in any part of the civilized world, but a great responsibility rests on the government to see that the home-seeker is attracted as never before. We must provide means to make him happy and prosperous. We must provide, among other things, well-equipped demonstration farms on which the government can place thousands of our returned soldiers, who are desirous of making

agriculture their life work for the future. We must provide abundance of room on those farms for the stream of war-worn European immigrants with agricultural inclinations which will be sure to come to us. When they have given evidence of their suitability for farm work, we must assist them to get properly located that they may at once become producers. The government will be ready in every desirable country in the civilized world to attract desirable immigrants to our shore. Then as to industry, the government have another great responsibility to see that there will be no gap in our industrial activities at the signing of peace. The government must see to it that the wheels of development must whirl on. The government are already endeavoring to find out how much of the merchandise we have paid others to make for us can be made profitably by our own people. What the government asks of the people is to assist in the task of getting ready. We believe now is the time to commence getting ready. We also believe this to be Canada's greatest opportunity of a generation, and perhaps of a century. We are determined that our preparations for peace will be intelligent and earnest, so that in a few years we will be better off than ever before, believing, as we do, that a few millions spent on intelligent preparation for peace will enable our country and her people to reap untold millions through the long future.

