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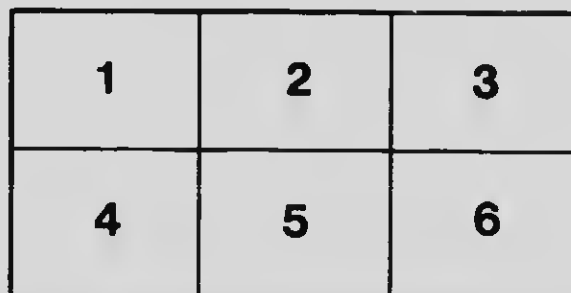
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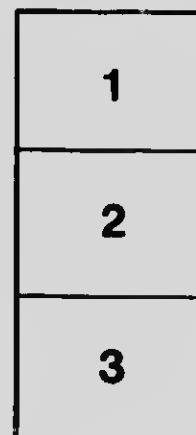
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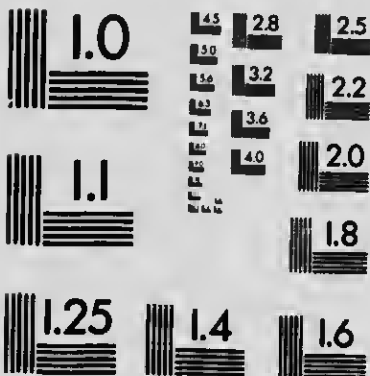
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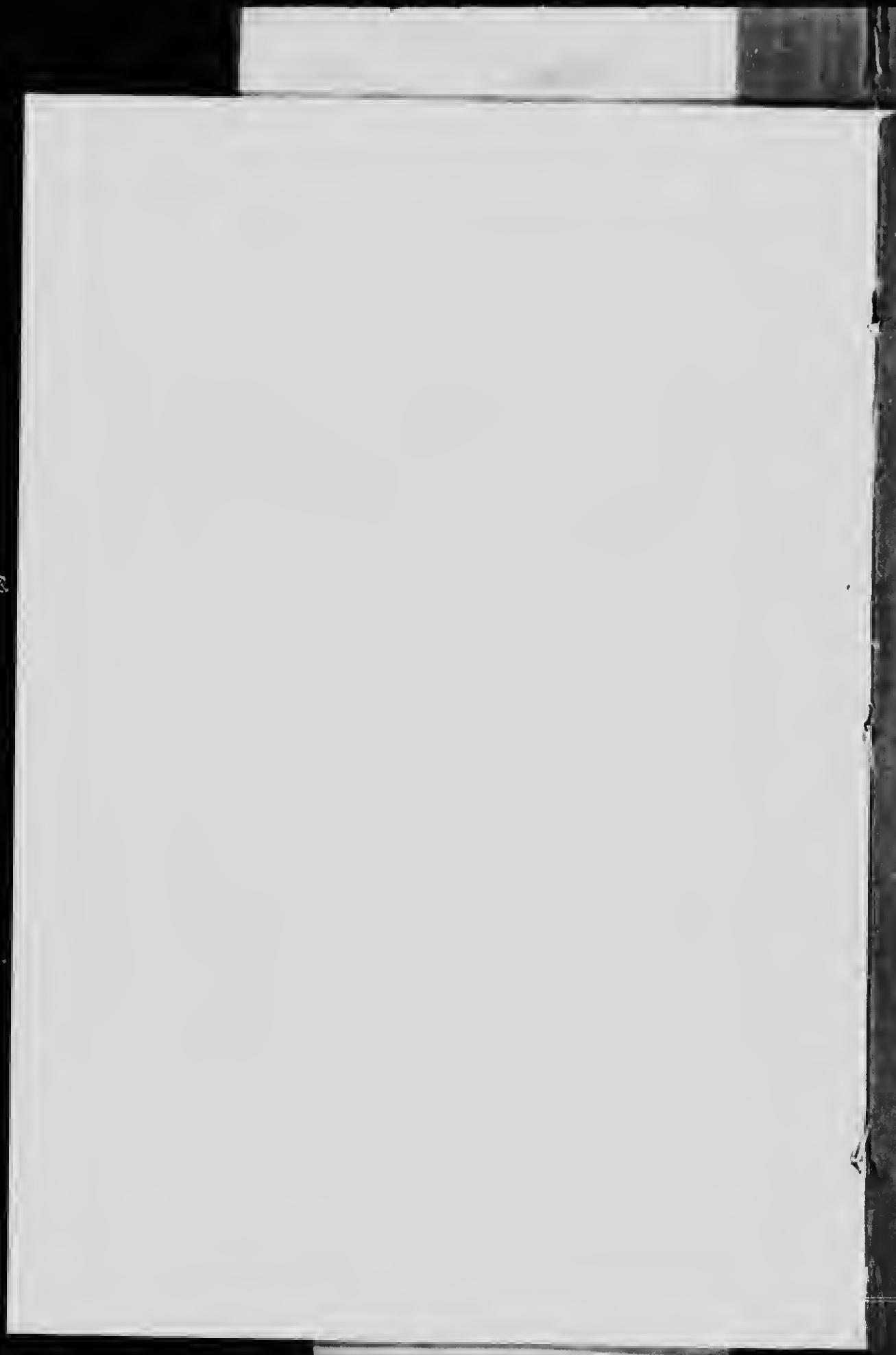


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To Canadian People

THE WRITS FOR A GENERAL ELECTION HAVE BEEN ISSUED

A consultation of the people at short and regular periods is the right of a free people. The constitution provides accordingly for a general election every five years. It is undeniable that there has existed a strong desire in the community to avoid an election during the war.

An impression prevails that had I accepted the invitation of the Prime Minister to join his government, a new extension would have been possible. This impression is absolutely erroneous the fact being that the invitation extended to me was coupled with the stipulation that the coalition government would pass a conscription measure, and then appeal to the country, thus making an election unavoidable.

The government as recently reconstructed, the Union Government so-called, is now appealing to the country for support. Six members of the Liberal party, some of them close personal friends, have consented to become members of the administration, and the programme which they intend to follow has

already been placed before the public, but in this programme, one trace is to be found that the Liberal members of the administration have succeeded in influencing their colleagues to the adoption of measures which they deemed essential not only to win the war, but for the welfare of the country at all times.

THE GOVERNMENT'S MANIFESTO

Most of the articles in the Government's manifesto are simply stale commonplaces extracted from the Conservative programme of 1911, forgotten after the election, resurrected for a new election. Such is the promise of economy of public expenditure, and such the promise of Civil Service Reform—two reforms which the Opposition would have been happy to support in the last Parliament, if the Government had afforded them the opportunity.

IMMIGRATION

One particular item is deserving of attention. "A strong and progressive policy of immigration" is promised. This will be, perhaps the most important question after the war. The bur-

dens which are now being accumulated and which will have to be assumed and borne by the Canadian people can be faced if the enormous resources of the country are developed. But development demands a rapid increase in the population. Hence the necessity of a strong and progressive immigration policy. It is manifest that the promised strong and progressive policy has been seriously impaired by the breach of faith with naturalized Canadian citizens involved in the withdrawal of the political franchise from large numbers of these citizens. This must prove a serious blow to immigration, especially when the conduct of the Canadian government is contrasted with the attitude of the United States, where no such indignity has been placed upon naturalized citizens.

CANADIAN NORTHERN RAILWAY

An article of the programme of the Government speaks of the development of transportation facilities, but in vague though rather ambiguous terms. No mention is made of the acquisition of the Canadian Northern Railway; yet this subject was not exhausted by the legislation of last session, and it will be one of the most important duties of the next Parliament again to review it.

One feature of the act of last session is that the Government becomes the owner of the stock of the Company, of the nominal

value of sixty million dollars. There never was a dollar paid in that stock. The experts employed by the Government to appraise the value of the whole enterprise, men of acknowledged ability and experience, themselves have reported that the stock of the Company has no value whatever.

Yet the Government have taken authority to appoint a board of arbitrators to give a value to that property without value.

The Opposition asked that the report of the arbitrators, whatever it might be, should be laid before Parliament for approval. Though this motion was rejected, it is the right of the people to declare that the case should not have been closed by the action of a moribund Parliament, but that the whole matter should be reported to, and adjudicated by the new Parliament.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

It was natural to expect that the reconstructed government would give very serious attention to the economic situation of the country, which is admittedly critical. There is no allusion to it except the vague promise of "effective measures to prevent excessive profits, to prohibit hoardings and to prevent combination for the increase of prices and thus reduce the high cost of living. The economic problems have to be grappled with at once, in no such vague general terms,

but in vigorous and concrete proposals.

CONTROL OF FOOD SUPPLIES AND PRICES

In connection with the high cost of living, I would ask drastic steps to bring under government control all food producing factories so that food may be sold at a fixed price under the control of the government, as has been done in Great Britain. To this end, arrangements should be made with the managements of the food producing factories allowing for a fair interest on investment and fair and reasonable net profits, so that food may be obtainable by the ordinary consumer at the best possible prices. Should such arrangements not be possible, I would not hesitate to commandeer all food factories.

Nor is that all. The government is invested with powers which they could and should have used to reduce the price of all commodities. These powers they have already exercised in the case of newsprint paper.

As far back as the month of February last an Order in Council was passed by which it was enacted that "with a view to ensure to publishers of Canadian newspapers, newsprint paper at reasonable prices" the Minister of Customs was "authorized and empowered to fix the quantity

and price of newsprint in sheets and rolls to be furnished by the manufacturers to the publishers in Canada".

By virtue of this Order the Government have compelled manufacturers of print-paper, against the latter's protest, to supply publishers and newspapers at a price which they themselves fixed as reasonable. If they could thus reduce the price of paper to consumers of paper, why did they stay there? Why should the Government not also have reduced to the hundred of thousands of anxious housewives and bread-winners the prices of all those commodities which make the ever-increasing cost of living one of the most insistent and dangerous of all the problems that now confront us.

PROFITEERING

One of the most important contributions towards winning the war is to put a stop to profiteering for the benefit of its partisan followers. A first duty of my administration would be to secure to the country which pays for war supplies, the excess of exorbitant profits being realized by profiteers. Should it be necessary, I would not hesitate, in order to immediately stop profiteering, to take control of the factories which are engaged in the supply of war materials, as had been done in Great Britain, and run them on the principle of reasonable return on investment for the owners, and reasonable legitimate

profit. I believe that one of the best methods of providing war supplies and saving the country from being exploited by profiteers would be to turn the government shops which are suitable for such purposes to the production of war materials, ships, etc., for the benefit of the country at cost price.

The prices of all commodities have been steadily rising since the beginning of the war. The daily provisioning of the family table is from day to day becoming a more and more alarming problem for all classes of wage-earners and for all people of small and of even moderate income. It is no answer to say that this is the natural consequence of the war. When it is considered that the price of bread and bacon—to speak only of these two commodities—is higher here in Canada than in the United Kingdom, this of itself is proof sufficient that the prices here are inflated by methods which are in no way connected with the war, unless the war is taken advantage of for the very purpose of inflation. Indeed, the principal causes of these ever soaring prices are none other than those described in the Government's manifesto as "excessive profits", "hoardings" and "combinations for the increase of prices". Since the Government knows where the evil is, what prevents the Government from striking the evil, and striking hard. The remedies are at hand, and I at once set down the policy.

TARIFF REFORM

No measure to reduce the cost of living can be effective unless and until the tariff is reformed and its pressure removed from those commodities in which there are "excessive profits", "hoardings" and "combinations for the increase of prices". Of this obvious, fundamental reform there is not a word in the Government's manifesto. Indeed, members of the present Government have announced that all questions of tariff legislation must be relegated till after the war.

Believing that increased food production is one of Canada's best contributions towards winning the war, I would propose if entrusted with the administration of the country to immediately relieve Agriculture from its disabilities in this regard.

Since the commencement of the War, the Government placed an increase of 7 1-2 per cent. in our tariff on all commodities coming into Canada from outside Great Britain, and an increase of 5 per cent on the goods coming from Great Britain. I would immediately remove those two disabilities as respects commodities from all countries other than those with which we are at war. There is no doubt that under existing conditions, these increases in the tariff are a hindrance rather than a help to production in Canada, whilst it is certain that in the final resort the consumer has to pay these extra taxes.

The increased duty on imports from Great Britain was an unfriendly and an unnecessary action on the part of Canada towards the mother country, at a time when British trade was staggering under the disadvantages incidental to the war. It continues to bear unfairly and unduly on existing trade and should be speedily removed.

In further mitigation of disadvantages to agricultural production, I would immediately remove the duties on agricultural implements and other essentials, as demanded by the western farmers.

A general well-considered reform of the Tariff for the purpose of helping Canadian production and relieving the Canadian consumers would also be an object of my administration.

CANADA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE WAR

It cannot be said too often that this war could not have been avoided by the Allies, and that it is a contest for the very existence of civilization. Of this the entrance of the United States into the conflict is further proof, if indeed further proofs were needed. The American people long hoped that they would be spared that ordeal, but the ruthless violation by Germany of the most sacred canons of International law left them no option; they had to join in the fight against a power which has become the common enemy of mankind.

At the very beginning, penetrated of the immensity of the struggle and of the necessity of bending all our efforts to the winning of the war, we, of the Opposition, gave to the Government every possible assistance. We assented to all their war measures, except when convinced that their measures would be detrimental rather than helpful.

This year the Government introduced a bill to make military service compulsory. With this policy I found it impossible to agree. If it be asked how this view is consistent with my oft expressed determination to assist in winning the war, I answer without any hesitation that this sudden departure from the voluntary system was bound more to hinder than to help the war.

It should be remembered that previous to the war, in all British countries conscription was unknown. It was the pride of the British peoples everywhere that compulsory military service, the bane of Continental Europe, had never been thought of in Great Britain, and that even the gigantic struggle against Napoleon had been fought on the purely voluntary system.

At the same time it must be pointed out that in Great Britain for some years before the war, in view of the immensity of war preparations amongst all the nations of the continent, the question of conscription was seriously and increasingly discus-

sed in Parliament and in the press, so that at last when a measure to that effect was introduced by the government, it came as no surprise. It found the people prepared, and yet even then strong protests were heard from many classes of the community.

Very different was the introduction of Conscription in Canada. It came as a complete surprise. It never had been discussed in Parliament, and the voice of the press had been strong against it.

In the month of July 1916 such an important paper as the Toronto "Globe" deprecated the very idea of Conscription. Here is what it said in a carefully reasoned editorial :

"The "Globe" in its editorial columns has consistently pointed out that in a country such as Canada conscription is an impossibility, and that no responsible statesman of either party capable of forming or leading a Canadian War Ministry would propose compulsory service. Nor has the "Globe" unduly criticised the failure of the Borden government to do more than it has done to assist voluntary recruiting. The criticism of the "Globe" and of Liberal papers have been exceedingly mild when compared with the vitriolic denunciations of the Toronto "Telegram" the "Winnipeg "Telegram", the "Montreal "Daily Mail" and other journals that have abso-

lutely no sympathy with the "Liberal party."

And even as late as December 27th, 1916, the "Globe" repeated its warnings against any effort "to force Canadians into the "ranks" and summed up public opinion thus:

"Trades unionists are found opposing Conscription, and the leading opponents of every manifestation of democracy are favouring the system."

No less emphatic had been the language of the government.

At the beginning of the session of 1916, in answer to my enquiry whether the promise recently made by the Prime Minister of enlisting 500,000 men meant Conscription, he answered in these words :

"My Right Honourable friend has alluded to Conscription — to the idea in this country or elsewhere that there may be Conscription in Canada. In speaking in the first two or three months of this war, I made it clear to the people of Canada that we did not propose Conscription. I repeat that announcement to-day with emphasis".

Equally emphatic and unqualified were my own declarations on the subject.

Throughout the campaign of 1910 and 1911, I may recall that the Nationalist-Conservative alliance which opposed the naval policy meant conscription. Meeting these as-

sertions I gave the public frequent assurance that under no circumstances would conscription follow the adoption of our policy. Again and again after the outbreak of the present war I insisted that conscription should not be introduced in Canada. Such was my position when the government reversed its attitude and, without warning, introduced the Military Service Act.

To force such a drastic measure upon a people thus unprepared and against repeated assurances to the contrary, was neither wise nor prudent, nor effective. It may bring men to the ranks but it will not infuse into the whole body of the nation that spirit of enthusiasm and determination which is more than half the battle. It will create and intensify division where unity of purpose is essential.

I am only too well aware that the views which I here present have not met with the universal acceptance, even in the party to which I belong, but even I hold that to coerce when persuasion has not been attempted, is not sound policy, and in this I appeal to the impartial judgement of all Canadians.

In combatting the policy of conscription, all that I asked was that a measure of such moment should not be enforced by Parliament without an appeal to the people. I supported a referendum for the reason that the referendum is the most advanced and

the most modern method of consultation of the people, without the complication inseparable from a general election. A referendum had also been asked on this very question by organized labour. My request was denied.

I appeal with great confidence to the fair judgement of the country that the introduction at this juncture and in the manner above described was a grave error, if it is remembered that the supreme object should have been and still should be to bring all classes of the community in the task which we assumed.

A fundamental objection to the Government's policy of conscription is that it conscripts human life only, and that it does not attempt to conscript wealth, resources, or the service of any persons other than those who come within the age limit prescribed by the Military Service Act. This is manifestly unjust. The man who is prepared to volunteer his services and to risk his life in his country's defence is entitled to first consideration. Those dependent upon him, and who spare him from their midst are the next most deserving of the State's solicitude and care. A policy which will accord first place to the soldier and the sailor in the concern of the State will, I believe, bring forth all the men necessary to fight its battles, without the need of recourse to conscription. If returned to power, I should adopt such a policy. My first duty will be to seek out

the ablest men of the country, men of organizing capacity as well as men representative of all classes in the community, and invite them, irrespective of what it may involve in the way of sacrifice of their personal interests, to join with me in the formation of a cabinet whose first object will be to find the men, money and resources necessary to ensure the fullest measure of support to our heroic soldiers at the front, and to enable Canada to continue to the very end her splendid part to win the war.

As to the present Military Service Act my policy will be not to proceed further under its provisions until the people have an opportunity to pronounce upon it by way of a referendum. I pledged myself to forthwith submit the Act to the people and with my followers to carry out the wishes of the majority of the nation as thus expressed.

I would at the same time organize and carry out a strong appeal for voluntary recruiting. It is a fact that cannot be denied that the voluntary system, especially in Quebec, did not get a fair trial, would receive from a generous people a ready response, which would bring them to the ranks, with good will and enthusiasm, and which would eliminate from our political life one of its most horrowing problems, as no loyal Canadian can view without the gravest apprehension a disunited Canada at this critical hour of our history.

To these views it is no answer

to say as is now often said, that we must have conscription or 'quit.' This statement is falsified by a recent and convulsive example. Australia rejected conscription and Australia did not "quit". Australia is still in the fight under the voluntary system. Each year has rendered increasingly apparent the necessity of organising the nation, in order that, so far as may be possible, the resources and population of Canada in their entirety may be made or service in the successful prosecution of the war. To-day, under the exhaustion the war has caused in the old world, Great Britain and her Allies are appealing as never before for more food, more ships, and more coal. No country has vaster resources than Canada, to supply these imperative requirements. What is needed is vigorous efforts to further an unlimited production. To meet the existing need, I am prepared in addition to the measures already outlined to take what further steps may be necessary to increase, double and quadruple the output of all that may be necessary for marching and fighting armies.

QUEBEC'S PART IN THE WAR

Mr. Crothers, Minister of Labour, speaking recently at St. Thomas, declared that if "Quebec had done her duty, as the other provinces we should never have required the Military Service Act."

If enlisting in Quebec was not on a par with enlisting in the other provinces, on whom does the responsibility rest? On whom but the Borden government, whose Quebec members openly, strenuously and persistently preached the Nationalist doctrine of "no participation by Canada, in Imperial wars, outside her own territory."

That doctrine first put forth in the riding of Drummond-Arthabaska in the autumn of 1910 by the whole Nationalist body, including two of the present ministers, won the election for them. In the general elections of 1911, reciprocity in Quebec was not the main issue; the main issue was the naval policy of the late administration, which was bitterly assailed by the same men, of the same doctrine of "no participation by Canada in Imperial wars outside her territory". And such doctrine taught on the hustings, circulated by the Nationalist press at the expense of the Conservative organization had a powerful influence in educating the public against the participation by Canada in Imperial wars outside her territory. The first result was at the polls when the Liberals won 38 seats and the Conservatives-Nationalist alliance won 27, the popular vote being even more evenly divided, the Liberals polling 164,281 votes and the Conservatives-Nationalist alliance 159,299. The second result was when the war broke out and a call made by the government for

volunteers. They reaped what they had sowed. There was one half of the province which they had educated to reject such an appeal.

THE RETURNED SOLDIERS

The greatest service that can be rendered the brave men who have first claim upon our gratitude and sympathy is to replace them in civil life. How to do that in the way best calculated to enable each man to become, if possible, self sustaining is a task that will call for the display of all that is noblest and best in the Canadian people. In a vast number of cases re-education and technical training will be necessary. In these cases patience and generosity on the part of the State, combined with sympathetic understanding, practical experience, and scientific knowledge on the part of those whom the State will call in to aid its efforts will go a long way towards helping the returned soldier to overcome the handicaps of war. If we but set ourselves resolutely to this task, its accomplishment will be hastened by the hearty co-operation of every man who has been on service overseas.

But there is another duty devolving upon us, the discharge of which should precede that above mentioned. The measures now in force for the maintenance, care and comfort of the soldiers' dependents and families are not adequate. In an effort to rectify this state of affairs and to em-

phasize its policy that the nation's obligations to the soldiers and their dependents must be discharged by the nation, and not through the medium of public benevolence or charity. Mr. Copp, member for Westmoreland, at the last session of Parliament, during the consideration of the Military Service Bill, moved this thoughtful resolution :—

"That the further consideration of this bill be deferred until such adequate provision has been made for the dependents of soldiers enlisted for overseas as will remove the necessity for raising money by public subscription for their support."

The resolution was opposed by the government and the motion for its adoption defeated. But the necessity for action must be taken to put the soldiers and their dependents beyond any possibility of want after public subscription have ceased and the glamour and excitement of the war have worn away.

THE WAR TIME ELECTION ACT

In order to be effective, to satisfy the public conscience and to secure that acquiescence in a verdict which should be the last word on all questions submitted to the people, a general election should be an appeal to the electorate such as it exists under the law.

The government have discarded that fundamental principle of the institution of a free people. They have designedly altered the sanctity of the franchise, by choking discussion, by ruthlessly using the closure, they have deliberately manufactured a franchise with which they hope to win a victory at the polls—a passing victory for themselves, a permanent injury to the country.

This act known as War Time Election Act, is a blot upon every instinct of justice, honesty and fair play.

It takes away the franchise from certain denominations whose members from ancient times in English history have been exempt from military service, and who in Great Britain never were, and are not now, denied their rights of citizenship.

It takes away the franchise from men whom we invited to this country, to whom we promised all the rights and privileges of our citizenship, who trusted in our promises and who became under our laws British subjects and Canadian citizens. They are thus humiliated and treated with contempt under the present that, being born in enemy countries, in Germany and Austria, they might be biassed in favour of their native country and against their adopted country. The assumption is false in theory and might easily be so demonstrated. It is sufficient to

observe that it is also false in fact. There has not been any current of emigration from Germany to Canada during the last twenty years, and as to Austria, almost the total number, perhaps nine-tenths of the emigrants from that country, were not from Austria proper, but from these Slav provinces held by force by Austria, and whose sympathies are strong and deep against her, and for the Allies.

It gives the franchise to some women and denies it to others. All those whose privilege it is to have near relatives amongst the soldiers will be voters. The right will be refused to all those not so privileged, though their hearts are just as strong in the cause, and though they have worked incessantly for it. Moreover in five provinces of the Dominion, namely Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, women have been admitted to the franchise. According to the terms of the Dominion law, which no sophistry can blur, being electors in the province, women are electors in the Dominion. The Act of last session snatches away the right from them.

The Act is vicious in principle, and is equally vicious in its enacting dispositions. We have in most of the provinces of the Dominion, a regular system of preparing the voters' lists, and against that system no complaint has been heard during the last twenty years. That system

is also cast aside, and lists are to be prepared by an army of so-called enumerators, whose work must be done in haste, whose powers arbitrary, with no useful checks to be exercised in due time, and with all doors wide open for errors, confusion and frauds.

The liberal members of the reconstructed government have put the mantle of their respectability upon this nefarious Act, as well as upon the Canadian Northern Railway Act, and upon many others against which they strongly protested and from which their presence in the government cannot remove the dangerous and indefensible character.

Such legislation is repugnant to every sense of justice and right. It has for its object and for its effect to discourage and to stifle the free expression of the will of the people, and to make parliamentary government a mere name without the reality.

A bold attempt is being made to silence the voice of the people by a systematic elimination of liberal candidates from the field.

It is my duty to appeal to all the friends of political freedom in every constituency to organize at once in order to defeat such a conspiracy. Let the masses unite and select their own standard bearers.

Should I be called upon to form a Government I would hope to include in its representatives

of business, of labour and of agriculture, of the men whose sole object in dealing with the affairs of the country will be to devote the whole resources, wealth and energy of the country to the winning of the war. It can only be done by honest agreement amongst all the different elements and interests of the country. I would hope to have a Government representative of the masses of the people, the common people whose guiding principle should be to defend them against organized privilege which has heretofore had far too much control over the Government of the country. In this election it is my desire that the common people should have opportunity of expressing themselves in a free and untrammelled manner at the polls, so that their views may obtain in the new Parliament and I trust that in every constituency candidates representative of this policy may be nominated so that the people can vote for them.

These considerations I now place before my fellow countrymen of all creeds and of all origins for their appreciation and judgment. I have deemed it my duty more than ever perhaps in the course of my long public life, to speak frankly and unequivocally upon the problems that now confront us. The obtaining on the retention of office is at all times, only a secondary consideration. In this election the supreme end is to assist in the tremendous struggle in which we are engaged, to maintain the unity of the nation, to avoid the divisions and discords, which for many years kept in check, are now unfortunately again looming up dangerous and threatening, to resolutely face the economic situation with a view of avoiding and lessening privations and sufferings, which should not exist in a country so richly endowed by nature as our country. Whatever may be the verdict at the polls, I will accept it, neither elated by victory, nor downhearted by defeat.

Wigford Laurier

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