

English Canada and the Election of 1917

The thesis attempts essentially to determine the extent and nature of the electoral support rendered to Union Government and the Liberal party in English Canada in the 1917 Federal election. In Ontario, New Brunswick and in the four Western provinces the Anglo-Saxon electorate indisputably favored Union Government to the degree that Liberalism was afforded meagre electoral support often reserved for politics of dissent. It is also the contention of the thesis that in areas where the Liberal party did manage to attract considerable electoral support the Liberal candidates had assumed a pro-conscriptionist posture thus making way for the traditional party joust in those regions. Both in Nova Scotia and in Prince Edward Island, areas where the Liberal party achieved some relative electoral success in 1917, the volatile issue of conscription was eliminated in this manner. Another factor which directly influenced the success of the Liberal party in English Canada is to be found in the strong bias for the politics of Laurier as displayed by the French- and German-Canadian electorates outside of Quebec. Lastly, the thesis analyzes the reaction of the organized farmer and laborite to the war, conscription and the election, purporting that the former overwhelmingly supported the war and Union Government while the latter hesitantly endorsed Canada's participation in the conflict and eventually contested the formation of Union Government.

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by

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PREFACE

The research and documentation of the thesis was made inestimably easier by the aid, guidance and encouragement of several people. Professor J.T. Copp who first stimulated my interest in Canadian History and who eventually suggested the theme of the thesis has been a most helpful critic and an untiring adviser. As an undergraduate student my interest in history was further developed by the friendly counsel and teaching enthusiasm of Dr. D.J. O'Brien and Dr. F.G.W. Adams. The unbounded confidence and encouragement expressed by my mother, father and sister in the course of my studies were invaluable to me. Miss Anny Derderian, the typist of the thesis, deserves praiseworthy mention for her patience and for her pleasant co-operation. Also, I am indebted to Miss Gail Kisil, Mr. Carl Tremblay and Mr. Geoffrey Palesch for their diligent proof reading of the thesis. Finally, I wish to thank the staffs of the MacLennan Library and of the National Public Archives in Ottawa for their courteous and unhesitant service and assistance.

INTRODUCTION

The theme for this dissertation arose from the author's fourth year honours essay entitled English - Canadian Attitudes Towards the First World War. The premise of that paper was, in essence, that the overwhelming majority of English-speaking Canadians of all classes and regions supported a policy of total commitment of Canada's manpower and material resources to winning the war and consequently endorsed the principle of conscription in 1917. The essay attempted to explain this near unanimity by examining newspaper opinion and other publications of the period. The premise for this thesis was thus derived from a casual examination of the 1917 election results. Originally the author had intended to further develop the theme of English-Canadian opinion towards the war, but it became apparent that the basic premise was in fact not accepted by a significant number of established Canadian historians, and that in particular many historians argued that the results of the 1917 election did not show a clear linguistic division on the issue of conscription.

J.M.S. Careless in his survey of Canadian history wrote of the 1917 results that "the division of races was not quite as sharp as it first appeared to be."¹ Kenneth McNaught spoke of "substantial

¹J.M.S. Careless, Canada, A Story of Challenge, Macmillan of Canada, 1963. 337.

farmer and labour opposition."² Edgar McInnis commented that the "overseas soldier vote . . . made the cleavage between Quebec and the rest of the Dominion, serious though it was . . . appear all the more glaring."³ Donald Creighton writing in 1970 describes the results of the 1917 election in the following passage:

The Laurier Liberals received less than eight per cent of the soldier vote, but very nearly forty-seven per cent of the civilian vote. Quebec accounted for nearly a third of this large total; but in other provinces as well there was significant evidence of dissent. In both Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island the Liberal won a small popular majority and even in Ontario, thirty-eight per cent of the voters cast their ballots for Laurier. Liberal strength was spread fairly evenly across the whole of English-speaking Canada; but sixty-two of the eighty-two Liberal seats were won in Quebec.⁴

If a prominent historian such as Donald Creighton could argue that "Liberal strength was spread fairly evenly" and associate Liberal strength with opposition to conscription then the premise of near unanimity in Anglo-phone Canada was not a clearly established historical generalization.

The purpose of this thesis then, is to attempt to establish the extent of opposition to conscription in the eight provinces of Canada with Anglo-phone majorities, and to explain by looking at the rhetoric of the election campaign the overwhelming popular support for conscription. Opposition to conscription is not of course the same thing as opposition to the Union Government and its candidates.

²Kenneth McNaught, The Pelican History of Canada. Penguin Books, Ltd. 1969.

³Edgar McInnis, Canada, A Political and Social History. Rinehart Co. Toronto. 1959. 415.

⁴Donald Creighton, Canada's First Century. Toronto. Macmillan. 1970. 152.

Where a Liberal or Labour candidate endorsed the Military Service Act and adopted a "win-the-war" attitude, voters were selecting members on grounds other than support or opposition to conscription. Votes cast for such candidates may not be considered as votes cast in support of Laurier's policy towards conscription. It may of course be that a percentage of the votes cast for Conscriptionist Liberals were anti-conscriptionist votes but if this is so there is no way of measuring it.

Several practical limits were necessarily imposed on the thesis. Only those ridings where Liberal and/or Labour candidates received more than forty per cent of the vote are examined in detail and background material from newspapers is limited to newspapers available either in Montreal or at the Public Archives of Canada.

The 1917 Labour vote and its background is discussed in a separate chapter as is the attitude of organized farmers because these two groups have been most often cited as sources of opposition to conscription.

CHAPTER I

PRE-ELECTION PERIOD: COALITION AND CONSCRIPTION

Throughout the war English Canadians of both Liberal and Conservative persuasion had displayed a keen sense of antipathy to calling a general election while the war was in progress, believing that partisan politics would only accentuate racial and sectional cleavages in the community, and thus divert the energies of the nation from the all-important question of war. The Toronto Globe, articulating the widespread feeling of English Canadians on the subject of an impending election in 1916 when the life of Parliament would come to a natural end, advocated that

To avert a war election by prolonging the life of the present Parliament is obviously the duty of all members, irrespective of party interests, leanings or affiliations. A general election would be a most unfortunate disturbance at a time when the entire strength of the Dominion¹ must be concentrated against a powerful enemy.

Laurier and the Liberal party, aware of the political perils involved in forcing an election in 1916, gave unanimous support to the extension of the life of Parliament for the period of one year.

While a goodly number of Canadians were expounding their deep aversion to an electoral joust between the two principal federal parties, it was also suggested that the Tories and Grits unite to form a National

¹Toronto Globe, February 1, 1916.

Government; however, no attempt to negotiate a coalition government by the political parties was ever seriously undertaken until the conscription crisis. The idea of coalition was repugnant to the majority of Liberals because they anticipated the early demise of the Borden administration as a result of the countless political misdemeanors and scandals that had been perpetrated by the Tories during the conduct of the war. In Quebec the Conservative party had forfeited the support of the Nationalists by its naval policy of 1912-1913 and by its unrestrained devotion to the war. While in English Canada the Borden Government had been castigated as incompetent and corrupt. Under such favorable conditions, Laurier expected to gain sizeable electoral support both in English and in French Canada. He patiently waited for the opportune moment to force a general election.

The Conservative party, realizing its discredited position, avoided a political contest with the Liberal party, acquiescing in the popular demand to postpone elections until after the war. The question of an election remained dormant until the espousal of conscription in May 1917 by the Borden administration. Conscription not only precipitated the need for an election but it also increased the agitation for a National Government.

Since the Conservative party had no desire to share political power with its Liberal opponents who had previously ruled without interruption for a span of fifteen years, it chose to remain reticent on the matter of coalition government. Consequently the idea of National Government had its origins among Liberal circles, especially in Toronto and Winnipeg.²

²O.D. Skelton, Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Oxford Press. Toronto. 1921. 496.

1. Borden, Laurier and Coalition Government.

At the beginning of 1917 a boisterous wave of agitation related to the demand for conscription and a National Government had begun to make itself heard in the country. Both Sir Robert Borden and Sir Wilfrid Laurier received considerable representation on the twin questions of conscription and coalition. Early in 1917, before Borden had left for the meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet in London, many associations, personal friends, and civic authorities corresponded with the Prime Minister, urging him to adopt the principle of compulsory military service and to bring about the formation of a National Government. Writing to a friend, Sir Robert gave vent to his feelings on the subject of coalition government:

Your suggestions with regard to the formation of a new government relate to a subject which has given me much concern. The power and life of any government are based upon the support of a majority in the House of Commons. There is great doubt whether any Coalition Government could command such a majority. Any failure in that regard would necessarily precipitate a general election which I am most anxious to avoid.

The Prime Minister remained silent on the issue until his return from England in May when he announced to the nation his intention of adopting the principle of compulsory military service as a measure enabling Canada to maintain her vigorous presence in the war. The need for conscription had swept aside Borden's fear of facing a general election in the eventuality that his coalition proposals should be rejected.

In the early months of 1917 Laurier was encouraged by several

³Borden Papers, Borden to Mr. Davidson, December 28, 1916. 40418

political associates to take the initiative in introducing a measure of conscription in parliament and to call for the formation of a coalition government. A friend, writing to Laurier, suggested the pressing need and the political advantage to be gained by introducing a resolution in Parliament calling for the implementation of the Militia Act whereby men between the ages of eighteen and fifty would be compelled to bear arms for home defence, and thus would facilitate recruiting for overseas.⁴ Laurier categorically rejected the proposal on the grounds that Canada was not presently endangered, and that her role was of a secondary nature in the conflict. Since the enforcement of the Militia Act was warranted only under extreme national peril involving "war, invasion, riot or insurrection real or apprehended" Laurier went on to argue that

In the present circumstances, Canada has certainly no reason to apprehend insurrection or riot, or invasion or war. It is physically and materially impossible for Germany to carry war into Canada. She might make a raid upon some cities on the Atlantic or the Pacific by means of cruisers, and under such circumstances, certainly the government would have the power to call out the militia. This would be the case of the emergency provided in the Act; but all such danger passed away the moment German cruisers which were in the Pacific at the time of the declaration of hostilities were sent to the bottom of the Ocean. . . . Let me add that if for my part I agreed to the participation of Canada in this war and sending troops beyond Canada, it was not for fear of an invasion but only for the reason that the cause for which Great Britain fought was just and in the highest interest of civilization.⁵

Laurier understood Canada's involvement in the conflict in terms of a colony assisting the motherland in a noble crusade. Sir John Gibson, a political associate of Laurier, staunchly opposed the Liberal

⁴Laurier Papers, Sir John M. Gibson to Laurier, January 1, 1917. 194349.

⁵Ibid., Laurier to Sir John M. Gibson, January 1, 1917. 194349.

chieftain's interpretation of the nation's role in the war:

How can you say that in the present circumstances Canada has certainly no reason to apprehend "insurrection, invasion, riot or war"? Surely we are at war now. Then you say it is physically and morally impossible for Germany to carry war into Canada, I say in reply that let Great Britain have a streak of bad luck and invasion might reasonably enough be looked forward to.

. . . We are in the war and are in danger of invasion. Whether the danger is remote or more or less imminent depends upon the course of the war and the successful prosecution of the war depends upon preparation for every emergency.⁶

At about the same time Laurier received a strong appeal from Newton W. Rowell, the leader of the Ontario Liberal party, to seriously consider coalition. In his correspondence to Sir Wilfrid, Rowell stressed the importance of averting a general election and the impelling need for a National Government:

I believe there is a very wide-spread feeling in this province that there is an urgent necessity for more vigor and efficiency in connection with our military administration. I also believe that if men frankly expressed their minds, there is among the more serious-minded people an increasing desire for a truly National government, so that instead of racial differences and racial appeals, we might move forward unitedly in facing the great and immediate future.

. . . If we had a truly National government, we might defer a general election another year; or if a general election should be necessary, it would be fought on less dangerous issues. I, therefore, earnestly hope that if Sir Robert Borden reaches the point where he is prepared to ask your co-operation to form a National government, you will see your way clear to join him.

. . . If he does not, but on the other hand insists on maintaining the present Party government and demands an extension of the life of Parliament without any promise or hope of reform, I trust you will see your way clear to take the ground that Canada's need at this time is truly

⁶Ibid., Sir John Gibson to Laurier, January 13, 1917. 194492.

National government, and that if a National government is formed, that an extension would naturally be considered as a part of the policy and program of such a National government.⁷

Laurier, at the beginning of 1917, had no intention whatsoever to either postpone a general election or to enter a coalition government. To his close French-Canadian associate, Roldolphe Lemieux, Laurier had written in the first week of January, while anticipating the Government's request to extend the life of Parliament for another year, that he would in no way consider prolonging the term of Parliament. As to coalition Sir Wilfrid was blind to the widespread feeling existing in English Canada. He dismissed the question of coalition as "une chose en l'air, dont personne ne s'occupe sérieusement."⁸ To Rowell, Laurier replied that the movement for National Government was a maneuver on the part of English-speaking politicians not "to entrust the direction of affairs to a leader of French origins", besides which he had no faith in the success of a National Government.⁹ Rowell promptly wrote in reply to set Laurier straight on the origin of the movement. Denying it to be an Anglophone conspiracy against Laurier's leadership, Rowell outlined the true source of the movement:

I believe one of the deep causes of the movement is the conviction that you cannot have the most united, whole-hearted, energetic and efficient prosecution of the war by a government carried on party lines, no matter to which party the government belongs.

. . . The only thing that they are supremely concerned about is that Canada should do her part worthily and they place this higher than any party consideration.¹⁰

⁷Ibid., Newton Rowell to Laurier, January 20, 1917. 19458.

⁸Ibid., Lemieux to Laurier, January 4, 1917.

⁹Ibid., Laurier to Rowell, January 23, 1917. 194600.

¹⁰Ibid., Rowell to Laurier, January 25, 1917. 194647.

From his political associates in Western Canada Laurier also received letters suggesting the urgent necessity to reorganize the existing inefficient state of politics so that the nation might prosecute the war more vigorously. The Hon. J.A. Calder, the Liberal Minister of Railways in the Saskatchewan government, informed Laurier in mid-January of the political unrest in Western Canada arising from the widespread popular dissatisfaction with the Borden administration which had culminated in "a growing sentiment for National Government." Calder strongly advised the Liberal chieftain to take the initiative in forming a National Government and, if Borden should then refuse to acquiesce in Laurier's call for a non-partisan government, the public would certainly rally behind the Liberal party.¹¹ Again, as he had done with Rowell, Laurier took Calder's advice as a direct challenge to his position as party leader:

Unless I am mistaken you are of the opinion, as I think Rowell is, that on account of my origin my usefulness is gone.¹²

Calder candidly answered Laurier, recapitulating for him the urgency for a National Government:

There undoubtedly is in the public mind a deep rooted feeling of dissatisfaction because a larger number of recruits have not been secured in Quebec. People do not stop to ascertain or analyze the causes. They look only at the results. On the streets, trains and around the hotels -- in fact wherever people gather together -- this is a very frequent topic of conversation. As a consequence I frequently hear it asserted that during the period of the war it would never do to entrust the Government of Canada to one of your origin. Unless something can be done and is done to get this feeling out of the air I am inclined to view that the results of an election between

¹¹Ibid., Calder to Laurier, January 16, 1917. 194533.

¹²Ibid., Laurier to Calder, January 24, 1917. 194541.

yourself and Borden along the old lines would be disastrous to the Liberal cause.

. . . Unless something is done and done quickly we may find on our hands an election in which all the English-speaking provinces of Canada would be arrayed against Quebec.

. . . The question as to what you can do and should do is contingent to a large extent upon what the actual condition of affairs is in Quebec. Have the teaching and doctrines of Bourassa Nationalism sunk in to such an extent as to make it impossible to recruit a larger number of soldiers in that province? Would you seriously endanger your position as the leader of the French Canadian people if you undertook to definitely promise the people of Canada that there could and would be raised in Quebec a stated number of troops? I fear that unless the replies to these two questions are satisfactory, your position in a general election would be very doubtful.¹³

Calder had touched upon the sensitive dilemma confronting Laurier -- whether to formulate a policy favorable to the majority of Canadians and thus forfeit his leadership of French Canada to Bourassa, or to voice the feeling of French Canada and henceforth arouse the ire of English Canadians. The adoption of conscription by the Borden administration forced Laurier to take sides.

2. Laurier's Opposition To Conscription

On Friday 18 May 1917 Borden announced his policy of conscription to the nation. This event raised a storm within the ranks of the Liberal party. Discord on the conscription issue ultimately led to the disintegration of the Liberal party in English Canada and to the formation of Union Government. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who had never really seriously considered the possibility of entering a coalition government, spurned the idea because French Canadians, as a whole, were vehemently opposed to the

¹³Ibid., Calder to Laurier, January 29, 1917. 194676.

policy of conscription as a basis for a National Government. Laurier had been aware of the dilemma that whatever position he took he would be unable to stave off racial disharmony; however, due to his fear of being dethroned as leader of French Canada, he chose to oppose conscription and coalition government, and publicly justified his course of action in terms of promoting national harmony.

Soon after the announcement of conscription, Sir Wilfrid Laurier was deluged by letters from Quebec political leaders emphasizing the inflammable situation in Quebec and urging him to resist the conscription measure:

L'annonce de la conscription crée une agitation intense partout dans nos campagnes. La mesure est excessivement impopulaire, même parmi les amis du gouvernement.

. . . Un très honnête homme, mais en même temps, un garçon très décidé, me jurait, samedi, que si l'on enlevait son fils de force, pour l'envoyer à la guerre, il partirait sans tarder pour Ottawa et casserait la tête du Premier-Ministre. Tout cela peut être l'expression d'une indignation passagère, mais il y a une sourde fermentation qu'il ne faudrait pas remuer trop, si l'on ne veut pas qu'elle éclate.¹⁴

Another political comrade from the province of Quebec warned Laurier of the disastrous effect on the Liberal organization in the province should he decide to support conscription. The end result of Liberal endorsement of conscription, it was stated, would entail the political alienation of French Canada and the creation of a Nationalist party in Quebec at the expense of the Liberal party.¹⁵ Sir Wilfrid reassured his French Canadian compatriots that he would not betray their trust in him:

¹⁴Ibid., Quebec Minister of Agriculture to Laurier, May 22, 1917. 195685.

¹⁵Ibid., M. Louis Letourneau M.P.P. to Laurier, May 23, 1917. 195711.

Je ne comprends pas l'anxiété de vos amis. J'en ai dit assez long l'autre jour pour être compris.

Quand j'ai dit que je ne voyais de raison de nous départir de la politique traditionnelle du pays en faveur de l'enrôlement volontaire, cela devrait suffire.

A tout événement ne vous alarmez pas à ce sujet, et rassurez nos amis, et surtout invitez-les à la modération dans l'expression de leurs idées.¹⁶

From his correspondence it is apparent that Laurier entered into negotiations with Borden on the question of a coalition government during the last week of May and the first week of June 1917 without any intention of embracing the scheme as long as conscription remained the basis for the establishment of coalition. Delaying an unequivocal rejection of Borden's proposal afforded Laurier time to formulate his plan of resistance to conscription, but it also permitted the forces of dissension within the party to grow in size and in determination.

While Sir Wilfrid's French-Canadian associates warned him not to concur with the Government's espousal of conscription and coalition, his English-speaking colleagues strongly counselled him to accede to Borden's policies. Even H.H. Dewar, a dyed-in-the-wool Laurierite, who condemned conscription as a Tory "trick", told Laurier that since popular opinion in Ontario favored "non-partisan and selective" conscription it would be to the party's political advantage not to resist the measure!¹⁷ Laurier retorted that he could in no way support conscription. He argued that it was imperative that he remain loyal to his past utterances on the subject, and to his Liberal faith which abhorred coercive measures of the magnitude of conscription.¹⁸ Laurier's anti-conscriptionist's

¹⁶Ibid., Laurier to Louis Létourneau, May 25, 1917.

¹⁷Ibid., H.H. Dewar to Laurier, May 25, 1917. 195729.

¹⁸It is interesting to note that the Laurier's administration had espoused the principle of compulsory military service in 1904 when it placed in the statute books the Militia Act.

attitude was also governed by his apprehension of being politically ostracized by French Canada. He wrote to an esoteric friend that

If I now were to deviate from this policy, I would be again attacked by the extremists in Quebec and represented as a deceiver; I would be put at once on the defense as a jingoist, which is the choice epithet with which they fought me before. Remember that the situation in Quebec was made by the Nationalists with the assistance of the official Conservative party.¹⁹

Laurier believed that his opposition to conscription, would lessen the blow to Canadian unity by preventing the Nationalists from gaining a political stronghold in Quebec.

From Western Canada came news to the Liberal leader that a split in the party would develop in that section of the country if Laurier chose to reject Borden's appeal for coalition.²⁰ Sir Wilfrid Laurier was quite aware of a rift developing in the party over the issue and was prepared to accept such an eventuality:

This may certainly happen, indeed, it happened before, when a large section of the Liberals, not only of the West but of the East severed their connection with the Liberal party on the question of Reciprocity. I do not think, however, that what has happened since has caused them to believe that in that instance they served their country; and the severance of Liberals from the party may again be followed with the same result.²¹

The Liberal premier of Nova Scotia, G.H. Murray, also asked Laurier to enter coalition for Canada's sake. Sir Wilfrid argued with Murray that in embracing coalition government there was not only the military question to be considered but also "the economic question and

¹⁹Ibid., Laurier to H.H. Dewart, May 29, 1917. 195738.

²⁰Ibid., William D. Card to Laurier, May 26, 1917.

²¹Ibid., Laurier to W.D. Card, June 1, 1917. 195751.

the Railway question and a multitude of other problems upon which we would be considerably at variance . . ."²² As Laurier came closer to rejecting officially the proposal of coalition his private letters reveal an increased sense of optimism in regards to the extent of anti-conscriptionist feeling in English Canada. Laurier had received hardly any letters to warrant such optimism.

There now existed a wide gulf between Laurier and a large number of his political confreres. This is disclosed in a letter to his devoted friend, Sir Allen Aylesworth. Painfully acknowledging the open rebellion of his intimate friends, F.F. Pardee and George P. Graham, he outlined the reason for their defection as he had come to understand it:

Those I hold responsible are the Liberals of the Round Table group, who by their alliance with the Tories, have forced the government to take up the issue of conscription . . .²³

Laurier's attempt to attribute the attitude of his English-speaking associates to imperialistic motives was an indication of how far out of touch with English-Canadian opinion he had become. This problem in perception was fully illustrated in Laurier's correspondence with Newton Rowell who was to become Borden's most important colleague in Union Government. The difference of opinion between Laurier and Rowell reflected diametrically opposed interpretations of Canada's role in the war: Sir Wilfrid viewed Canada's involvement in the conflict as a limited effort to assist Great Britain and the allies; whereas Rowell regarded Canadian participation as total and national in motivation. Newton Rowell had come to the conclusion that "the time has come when

²²Ibid., Laurier to Murray, June 5, 1917. 195921.

²³Ibid., Laurier to Aylesworth, June 22, 1917. 196103.

we can all recognize that Canada is being defended in Flanders and in France, just as truly and much more effectively, then she could be defended on the banks of the St. Lawrence."²⁴

Laurier reiterated his arguments to Rowell and to Liberals of his stripe but in the end failed to impress them because they were more concerned with the effective reinforcement of the Canadian army than with party solidarity. Conscriptionist Liberals remained insensitive to Laurier's plea to adopt a middle-of-the-road political program which would win the affection of French Canada and thus prevent Henri Bourassa and his Nationalist cohorts from gaining political hegemony in Quebec.

Finally on 6 June after two weeks of meaningless negotiations Sir Wilfrid Laurier announced his official rejection of the coalition proposal. In a letter to Borden, Laurier stated that the terms for coalition were totally unacceptable to him. Conscription had been the only basis for coalition and for this primary reason Laurier refused to enter a fusion government.²⁵ Consequently, in an attempt to forestall a split in the Liberal party Laurier proposed that Canadians be consulted on the conscription issue. The Liberal leader's referendum proposal was jeered at by conscriptionists as a cowardly measure which would only stir up and emphasize the shades of opinion in the country. In Parliament, when the Military Service Act came up for debate, prominent Liberals from all sectors of English Canada dissented from the party line: Frank Carvell, M.P. for Carleton, New Brunswick, voiced the spirit of nationalism that characterized the attitude of most conscriptionist Liberals:

²⁴Ibid., Rowell to Laurier, May 29, 1917. 195790.

²⁵Borden Papers, Laurier to Borden, June 6, 1917. 40047A.

I think there is nothing which Canada is so much interested at the present time as that we should do our full duty to bring the war to a successful conclusion, in order that liberty, justice and righteousness may have a chance upon earth in the future.

. . . I look at it as our duty to send all the men we possibly can, in order to make the war the success that the whole civilized world is praying that it will be . . .

To the man who says: you are fighting for England in this war I say: we are fighting for ourselves in the war, no man reveres the autonomy of Canada more than I do; no man believes more strongly than I do that Canada should manage her own affairs.

. . . had this Bill been proposed a year ago I would not have voted for it. I did not believe in conscription. I believe in freedom as far as it is possible to have freedom upon the earth.

. . . if I believe today that we could get all the men we might require I would still be opposed to conscription.²⁶

Along with Mr. Frank Carvell, Liberals from all sectors of the country asserted their endorsement of the Military Service Act. Twenty-six of fifty Liberals from English Canada voted in favor of conscription, sixteen voted against the Act, and eight were not present for the third reading of the Bill.²⁷ By August the Liberal party was severely divided and the impetus to form a fusion government was revived around this nucleus of the twenty-six Liberal dissentients.

3. Borden's Struggle For Coalition

In the wake of Laurier's refusal to enter coalition, Borden persevered in his efforts to bring about a National Government.

²⁶Hansard, House of Common Debates. June 27, 1917. 2709-2715.

²⁷Among the Liberal members of Parliament that spoke strongly in favor of conscription in the House of Commons, the following may be included: F.F. Pardee, George Graham, Duncan Ross, James S. Douglas, W.A. Buchanan, Mr. Sinclair, W.F. Carroll, Mr. Turiff, Mr. Guthrie and Mr. German.
op.cit., Hansard, 1917. vol. IV. 3736.

While the Prime Minister strove in that direction he had to contend with elements in the Conservative party that were either suspicious or outwardly opposed to the idea of coalition. The Hon. J.D. Reid, the Minister of Customs, along with Robert Rogers, the Minister of Public Works, and Arthur Meighen, the Solicitor-General, devoted their united energies to obstruct Borden's course of action.²⁸ Both Reid and Meighen from the very beginning had endeavored to instill in the mind of Borden the impression that the conscriptionist Liberals under the furtive direction of Laurier were plotting to mislead the Conservative party by their avowed sympathy for conscription. In a confidential handwritten note to Sir Robert Borden, Reid revealed his suspicions:

. . . I am forced to the conclusion Sir Wilfrid is working with Graham to hold his men from joining our government in any way. That Graham is to take a strong stand for conscription and try and carry as many seats as he and the rest of them can. That Sir Wilfrid will take the opposite position and whether he remains leader or not carry the other wing, and after an election Graham with his following join hands. Or in other words they are privately playing a strong game of politics while outwardly apparantly [sic] not. I do not believe there is any possibility of a Union with the English end

What would I advise doing? I would first strongly consider the necessity of reorganizing your cabinet at once and taking it for a granted failure in inducing any of the present Liberal members to join. Would seriously consider taking in some outsider.²⁹

Almost to the very moment that Union Government came into existence Reid adamantly maintained that Borden would carry the country in an election with any government he formed regardless of Liberal support. Even after

²⁸Arthur R. Ford, "Some Notes on the Formation of Union Government." Canadian Historical Review, December 1938. 359.

²⁹Borden Papers, J.D. Reid to Borden, June 9, 1917. 40497-40450.

Union Government had been formed Reid sounded his suspicions to Borden about the traitorous intention behind the conscriptionist Liberals' desire to become an integral part of Union Government.³⁰

The Hon. Robert Rogers, who had been a political liability since the disclosure of the war-time scandals, bitterly fought the fusion movement within the Conservative party. He had been the party campaign manager, the Minister of Elections, and had unsuccessfully urged the government in the early phase of the war to call a surprise election in an attempt to take advantage of the political climate resulting from the outbreak of war.³¹ His endeavors to force an election along party lines were shattered by Sir Robert Borden's untiring efforts to negotiate a coalition between Liberals and Conservatives. Frustrated by the Prime Minister's insensitivity to his appeals and advice, Robert Rogers handed his written resignation to the party in the middle of August 1917. In part his resignation read:

When our opponents violated that now famous so-called truce and carried on, as they are carrying on today their slanderous campaign, I believe then, as I believe now, that it was our duty to have taken steps in the interest of our party to counteract the effects of such a campaign. . .

I fear that at this period of our crisis that any such union that leaves the official Opposition intact is not likely to inspire much confidence.

Under these circumstances, I of course cannot help but deplore your admission that the fortunes of our country should no longer be entrusted solely to the party you represented.³²

³⁰ Ibid., J.D. Reid to Borden, October 25, 1917. 40919.

³¹ op.cit., A.F. Ford. 359.

³² Borden Papers, Robert Rogers to Borden, August 18, 1917. 40896-40897.

Roger declared that under these intolerable and exasperating conditions, he regrettably had no alternative but to resign. Ultimately the resignation of the Hon. Robert Rogers helped to pave the way for Union Government. For many conscriptionist Liberals, who had regarded the Minister of Public Works as the epitome of Tory corruption, the idea of fusion with the Conservative party became more palatable.³³

During the summer months of 1917 while Parliament was in the midst of legislating the Military Service Act, Borden had approached a number of influential conscriptionist Liberals on the subject of coalition in the hope of drawing their support away from Laurier; however, he made little progress. Newton Rowell was one of those Liberals in whom Borden confided, outlining for him the futile attempts he had undertaken to win Sir Wilfrid's support, but the Ontario Liberal leader while endorsing Borden's position as to conscription and National Government, was unable at first to see his way clear to joining the ranks of the projected coalition. The stumbling block was that a significant number of Liberals were unprepared at the time to desert the Liberal organization. Rowell had stated the crux of the problem in a letter as it had been earlier discussed at a meeting between himself and Borden:

I . . . intimated that in my opinion the men who entered a Coalition or National Government should carry with them the parliamentary support of the party which they represented. I pointed out the difference in the position of the conscriptionist Liberals in the House of Commons, and my own, and that considering any proposal I must have regard to my duties and responsibilities as Leader of the Liberal Party in Ontario Legislature. As however,

³³op.cit., A.R. Ford

I believed in conscription and in the formation of a Coalition or National government, I said I should be glad to do anything in my power to help bring about, if possible, an understanding whereby such a government might be formed, though I saw little hope of success in view of the conditions and results of your prior efforts. I added that I did not believe in the entrance of two or three individual Liberals, including myself, into your government, would solve, or materially contribute to the solution of the present critical situation, and that therefore I could not entertain such a suggestion, but that any action I might take would be in co-operation with other Liberals who supported compulsory military service.³⁴

In an effort to gain widespread Liberal support, Borden had begun secret negotiations with other important Liberal leaders during the months of July and August. In the West he had communicated with A.L. Sifton, J.A. Calder, and Thomas Crerar; in the East he had appealed to Frank Carvell. Although, to the disappointment of Borden and his Western allies, the Winnipeg Liberal convention held in the first week of August had decisively rejected the idea of coalition, Sifton and his associates continued to negotiate with Sir Robert Borden, demanding by the end of August a change in leadership as a pre-requisite to the formation of a National Government.³⁵ To meet the Western demand for new leadership, Borden had been prepared to submit his resignation; however, his offer to step down in favor of Sir George Foster was unanimously rejected by a Conservative caucus on 29 August. In time Western conscriptionist Liberals overcame their aversion to Sir Robert's leadership, realizing that to attain their goal of National Government

³⁴Borden Papers, Rowell to Borden, July 6, 1917. 40064-40066.

³⁵Borden received the following coded Telegram from Calder, Crerar, Hudson, Sifton:

"We all favor National Government and creation of War Council of Six. Change of leadership essential. Suggest Foster, Beck or Muloch. Subject to satisfactory arrangement with new leader. Strong Eastern colleagues all willing too."

Borden Papers, August 25, 1917.

the good will of both parties was absolutely imperative.

With negotiations stalemated and with the convention of Western Liberals having advocated party solidarity, Borden became somewhat alarmed over the forthcoming election. It was under this shadow of uncertainty of the political forces he had to grapple with in an election that Sir Robert Borden framed his plans of revising the electoral laws of the nation. Both the Soldiers Voting Act and the Wartimes Election Act, passed by Parliament during August and September of 1917, reflected the Prime Minister's consternation concerning the unknown size and nature of the opposition in an electoral contest that would see inevitably French Canadians vote en masse for Laurier's anti-conscriptionist platform.

4. Laurier's Attempt To Maintain Party Solidarity.

While Sir Robert Borden had become dejected with his efforts to bring about coalition, Sir Wilfrid Laurier felt most satisfied with his ability to restrain the divergent elements in his party from open rebellion. Laurier's ultimate goal during the summer months of 1917 was not to dictate acceptance of party policies but to promote party cohesion by allowing individual Liberals to dissent on the question of conscription as long as they remained loyal to his stewardship.

In Ontario, a Liberal conference staged in Toronto on 20 July asserted its loyalty to Sir Wilfrid, spurning the coalition proposal as unfeasible. It was announced that winning the war would be the first priority of the party and that Laurier would guide the nation towards

that objective. As to the method of recruiting the Liberal caucus declared that the voluntary system would be given another trial before conscription would be resorted to. The tactic of neither supporting nor opposing conscription until further evaluation of the recruiting problem was intended to stave off the potential secessionist movement in the Liberal party. To Laurier conscription was only an evanescent issue which would be forgotten in the near future. Writing to W.C. Wade, editor of the Vancouver Sun and a faithful Laurierite Liberal, Sir Wilfrid instructed him how to manage the affairs of the crucially important Western Liberal conference that met in Winnipeg on the seventh and eighth of August to decide the political priorities of Western Liberalism:

Sifton came here almost the same time that Borden arrived from England, and my version is that they came together on the same boat, though as to this I have no positive information.

He will try, I have no doubt, to dominate the Convention which is to sit at Winnipeg in August, and have it pass a conscription resolution. This ought to be fought to a finish. The only position to take there on this question is to leave it an open question, as I have left it in the House Of Commons. There is no other course possible, and you should at once take that attitude in your paper: that the matter is an open one, that I left it an open one and that it must so remain. It is purely transient and, in a few months, it will be all over; it would be mischievous to make it the cause of a permanent cleavage in the ranks of the party.

The only thing as to which I am concerned is to maintain the unity of the country first, and the unity of the party next.³⁶

³⁶Laurier Papers, Laurier to W.C. Wade, July 25, 1917. 196324.

Also in his correspondence with Premier H.C. Brewster of British Columbia, who had publicly declared himself in favor of conscription, Laurier stressed the importance of maintaining party solidarity at the convention:

. . . there is no reason yet to be alarmed. The conscription measure is only a passing event. The important thing to remember is to keep the unity of the party on broad principles.

You have been invited to a convention of the Western provinces to be held at Winnipeg on the seventh and eighth of August. The only thing as to which I am concerned at present, is that this convention should keep clear of the conscription issue.³⁷

The Western Liberal convention had brought together over eight hundred Liberal delegates including the four Premiers from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. It was common knowledge at the opening of the convention that the Vancouver delegation under the leadership of W.C. Wade and part of the Alberta delegation under the aegis of the Hon. C.W. Cross had come to the political gathering with the firm intention of steering the assemblage away from a conscriptionist stance, while favoring the endorsement of Sir Wilfrid Laurier as party chieftain. The party machine proved most successful in its control of the convention, stifling any overt dissension within the party. The convention organizers had masterfully skirted the issue of conscription by adopting a nebulous resolution:

In time of peril the entire resources of the country, moral and material, manpower and wealth, are justly disposable by the state for the preservation of its national liberties.

³⁷Ibid., Laurier to H.C. Brewster, July 12, 1917. 196210.

The imperative duty of the Canadian people in regard to war is its continued vigorous prosecution.³⁸

Mr. Turiff and other self-proclaimed conscriptionist Liberals had tried to no avail to persuade the convention to incorporate a phrase into the resolution which demanded the vigorous prosecution of the war "by conscription if necessary." Liberals like Dafoe,³⁹ Greer, and Sifton, who had actively promoted the formation of a National Government and the denunciation of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's leadership, were not discouraged by the deliberation of the Western Liberal convention. In the following weeks these prominent figures from Western Canada took great pains to marshall the forces of Western Liberalism behind their cause and eventually precipitated a rift in the Liberal party.

Laurier was both honored and jubilant over the results of the convention:

The Winnipeg Convention was certainly a great success from the political point of view. As to myself personally the last resolution is a tribute of confidence which I cannot but be very grateful.⁴⁰

³⁸Manitoba Grain Growers' Guide, August 15, 1917.

³⁹J.W. Dafoe, who had been disenchanted by Laurier's political posture in the bilingual school question of 1916, and who as editor of the Manitoba Free Press had chauvinistically promoted Canada's burgeoning participation in the conflict, had retorted scathingly to George Graham's request that he keep a watchful eye on the proceedings of the convention and prevent it from espousing an anti-Quebec bias:

I hope most Westerners are as tired as I am of being told that we must not do this because Quebec would not like it, or that the party must do that because otherwise Quebec will rally to Bourassa.

Ramsay Cook, "Dafoe, Laurier, and the Formation of Union Government." Canadian Historical Review. September 1961.

⁴⁰Laurier Papers, Laurier to Calder, August 11, 1917.

When Sir Wilfrid had begun to think that he had the fate of the party in complete control, events in the latter half of August and in the month of September led to the disruption of the Liberal party in English Canada. Liberal opposition which had been contained within the party structure since May burst out and became electoral opposition to Laurier. Until mid-August Laurier's efforts thwarted open rebellion in the party ranks. For the most part, those Liberals who had remained loyal to party lines because of their unbounded admiration for their chieftain, frustrated by Laurier's staunch aversion to coalition and conscription, allied themselves with the more blatant conscriptionist elements in the party and joined hands with Borden's Government.

Western Liberalism delivered the death blow to party solidarity. The evolution of the secessionist movement in the Liberal party had hinged upon the position of Western Liberals since the Ontario conscriptionist Liberals under the tutorship of Newton Rowell and F.F. Pardee had been prepared to break party ranks if Liberals from other sectors of the country joined en masse in the mutiny. Once the Liberals from Western Canada and Ontario had decided to rebel, the Maritime Liberals simply acquiesced in the movement.

From 21 August when a massive gathering of two thousand people met in Winnipeg and passed a resolution favoring conscription and repudiating Laurier's leadership, the movement for National Government gained momentum. Finally on 28 September it was publicly announced in the press that Western Liberals led by Sifton, Calder and Crerar had seen their way clear to enter coalition with Sir Robert Borden.⁴¹

⁴¹Hopkins, J. Castell, The Canadian Annual Review. 1917. 577-582.

APOLOGIA OF AN OLD LIBERAL

Losh, man! the world's a' muckle soon
In ilka nation, shifts an' toon
A' never felt as like a leen
Since it was born
It's a' through the muckle soon
An' a' an' an' soon

A' never thought to see the day
When, in a doon, I'd be a leen
A Liberal has made a leen
"Na' count me not"
A' canna' gang wi' the leen
This time, a' doon

If any prophet said to me
"The day is comin' when
You yoked "a' leen" companion
An' a' an' an' soon
A'd throttled him, an' reined the leen
Back oon his leen

But, gird the toon, the toon to see
Na' question about the leen
Th' day A'm in the leen
Wi' Gordon the leen
A' feel a' the leen the leen
Rein'd the leen

Yet, fegs! A' feel na' sense of blame
Na' far frae that! A' feel the name
O' Unionist wi' pride, no' shame
A'd tocht the leen
It means the leen, that's the leen
A' doon the leen

It's just the name o' the leen
In this grim leen, a' doon the leen
When help for the leen, in the leen
A' doon the leen
An' how to run the leen
Is the whole leen

A' doon the leen, a' doon the leen
An' gloried in his leen, a' doon the leen
But when the leen, it's the leen
That he's a leen
Believin' troops will leen
What will A' do?

Because A'm Liberal - that's the leen
A' say "Fare-well," an' gang alone
A'll maybe follow him again
As chief and guide
But no' the leen, ma duty's plain
A' canna' leen

We daurna' wait an' wait oon time
Soilin' oor honor's leen wi' crime
'Twould be, in the leen, a daunt crime
The leen's chance
O' doon in the leen
An' quinn' France

A'm Unionist bein' a' doon
For doin' what we leen in leen
An' keepin' faith wi' A' leen
An' sons sae brave
A'll no' see Canada, dear leen
A' traitor leen

J. W. BENGOUGH,

APOLOGIA OF AN OLD LIBERAL

Loosh, man! the world's a' upside-doon
In ilka nation, shiré an' toon—
A' never felt as like a loon
Since a' was born;
It's a' through-ither, nicht an' noon,
An' eve an' morn!

A' never thought to see the day
When, in a dour election fray,
A Leebéral like massel' wad say:
"Na, coont me oot;
A' canna' gang wi' Lauriaye
This time, a' doot!"

If any prophet said tae me:
"The day is comin' that wull see
You yoked wi' Tory company,
An' gi'en ye'r vote,"
A'd throttled him an' rammed the lee
Back doon his throat!

But, sirs, the thing has come to pass,
Nae question aboot that, alas!
Th' day A'm in the Union class,
Wi' Borden there!
A' feel as if some Baalam's ass
Rebuked me sair!

Yet, fegs! A' feel nae sence o' blame;
Na! far frae that! A' wear the name
O' Unionist wi' pride, no' shame—
A'd fecht tae win't!
It means tae me, Faith, Freedom, Hame!
A' glory in't!

It's just the name o' Common-Sense
In this grim 'oor o' dread suspense,
When help for thae dear lads in France
Must—MUST be sent;
An' hoo to rush men woonest thence
Is the whole p'int!

A've lo'ed Sir Wilfrid mony a year,
An' gloriéd in his graun' career,
But when tae me it's unco clear
That he's astray
Believin' troops wull volunteer,
What wull A' dae?

Because A'm Leebéral—that is, nae,
A' say "Farewell," an' gang aiaue;
A'll maybe follow him again
As chief and guide,
But no' the noo—ma duty's plain,
A' canna' bide!

We daurna' wait an' waste oor time,
Sollin' oor honor's pledge wi' grime,
'Twould be, in fae, a dastard crime
Tae rin sic' chance
O' droonin' in the Russian slime
An' quiltin' France!

A'm Unionist because A' stan'
For doin' what we took in haun'
An' keepin' faith wi' Albee graun'
As we can
A' hoo we canna' see an' stan'
A' truer name!

On 12 October Borden announced to the nation the formation of Union Government, and on the next day the members of the Unionist cabinet were revealed. Ten of the twenty cabinet members were prominent Liberals from every sector of English Canada, including such notables as Hon. Newton Rowell, Hon. Frank Carvel, Maj. Gen. Sydney Newburn, Hon. Arthur Sifton, Hon. Thomas Greer, Hon. James Calder and Hon. Hugh Guthrie.⁴²

The idea of Union Government had finally become a reality as a result of the belief held by leading Canadians of both Liberal and Conservative persuasion that the European conflict was their own war for national freedom and honor. Realizing that their belief was endangered by the anti-conscriptionist forces led by Laurier, they found common grounds to unite.

⁴²Refer to Appendix 1 for list of Union Cabinet members.

CHAPTER II

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN ONTARIO

In 1917 the Liberal party which had watched ominously the gradual erosion of its political influence in the province of Ontario since 1896¹ suffered a crushing defeat never before experienced in the province. In terms of an English-speaking response the defeat was comparable to political annihilation. In the two previous elections of 1908 and 1911 the Liberals had attracted 47.2 per cent and 43.1 per cent of the popular vote in Ontario, and had been awarded 37 and 13 seats respectively. In 1917 the Liberals managed to obtain 33.7 per cent of the popular vote,² and proved victorious in only eight ridings.

1

	1896		1900		1904		1908		1911		1917	
	seats	%	seats	%	seats	%	seats	%	seats	%	seats	%
LIBERAL	43	44.8	37	48.5	38	49.5	37	47.2	13	43.1	8	33.7
CONSER.	43	40.2	55	49.7	48	50.3	48	51.0	73	56.2	74	62.7
OTHERS	6	15.0	--	1.8	--	.2	1	1.8	--	0.7	--	3.6

* percentage of popular vote

J.M. Beck, Pendulum of Power. Prentice-Hall of Canada. 1968.

²The term popular vote includes military vote.

The demographic composition of the province reveals that eight per cent of Ontario's population was French Canadian, and a little more than eight per cent was of German-Austrian descent.³ If the latter two racial groups can be shown to have voted en masse for Laurier it would be safe to estimate that less than twenty per cent of the Anglo-Saxon community of the province supported the Liberal party in 1917 quite apart from the question of whether that support was afforded to conscriptionist Liberals.

1. The Emergence of Union Government

With the formation of Union Government on 12 October, the preponderant majority of daily newspapers in Ontario, notwithstanding traditional party affiliation, lined up behind Sir Robert Borden in their quasi-religious support of the new government and its policies. The only daily Liberal newspaper in Ontario which remained loyal to Laurier during the electoral campaign was the London Advertiser. Most Ontario newspapers had awaited eagerly the creation of Union Government and extolled its appearance as both a means to promote vigorous Canadian participation in the war and as the beginning of a new era in Canadian politics. The Ottawa Citizen,

³According to the 1911 census the total population of Ontario amounted to 2,523,274, of which 202,442 were classified as French-Canadians and 203,991 as German and Austrians. It will be shown later in this paper that the bulk of the Ontario German and Austrian population was unaffected by the Wartimes Election Act as pertaining to the disfranchisement of enemy aliens.
Canada, Fifth Census, 1911.

an independent Liberal newspaper, commented:

Union government at present is like a means and a symbol. It is a measure inasmuch as it has brought into being to meet a particular condition; it is a symbol of what this country is to experience in the future if the people are but true to themselves when the necessity for Union government has passed away. . .⁴

The Conservative London Free Press added that:

Canada rejoices in Union Government because she knows and understands that Union Government is another term for unified national effort for the victory in the struggle of the nation.⁵

Much praise was heaped upon the character of Sir Robert Borden who, it was generally believed, was directly responsible for the birth of the new government.

Since the issue of conscription had prompted the formation of Union Government, it was apparent to the Canadian electorate from the beginning that the issue of whether to support the Military Service Act or reject it should dominate the election campaign. Unionists insisted that the issue of the election was simple and clear-cut:

. . . It will not be a contest between Liberals or Conservatives. On the one side will be the conscriptionists and on the other those who are opposed. Conscription stands for organization; anti-conscription is opposed to organization. Conscription will send men to the support of their comrades at the front just as anti-conscription will permit the whole war effort of Canada to fall into inaction and finally failure.⁶

⁴Ottawa Citizen, October 13, 1917.

⁵London Free Press, October 13, 1917.

⁶London Free Press, October 13, 1917.

Can All These Be Wrong?

Union Government Is Supported By:

The Liberal Premier of Nova Scotia, Hon. W. M. Murray.

The Liberal Premier of New Brunswick, Hon. W. E. Foster.

The Liberal Premier of Manitoba, Hon. T. C. Norris.

The Liberal Premier of Saskatchewan, Hon. W. M. Martin.

The Liberal Premier of Alberta, Hon. A. L. Sifton, who has joined the Unionist Government.

The Liberal Premier of British Columbia, Hon. H. C. Brewster.

Liberal leaders who have joined the Unionist Government are:

Hon. N. W. Rowell, leader of the Liberal Party in Ontario.

Hon. Frank Carvell, who is minister of public works.

Major General Mowburn, minister of militia

Hon. Messrs. Crerar, Calder, Sifton, Ballantyne, Guthrie and A. K. MacLean.

Also Hon. W. S. Fielding, for 15 years Sir Wilfrid's right hand supporter, is elected by acclamation as a supporter of the Union Government.

F. F. Pardee, Liberal whip in the Dominion House, has also joined the Union Government forces.

Whole hearted support of the Union Government is given by Liberal newspapers from Victoria, B. C., to Halifax, N. S. These include the following daily newspapers:

The Times, Victoria.
The Sun, Vancouver.
The Albertan, Calgary.
The Leader, Regina.
The Phoenix, Saskatoon.
The Free Press, Winnipeg.
The Globe, Toronto.
The Star, Toronto.
The Whig, Kingston.
The Times, Hamilton.
The Expositor, Brantford.
The Sentinel Review, Woodstock.
The Mercury, Guelph.
The Globe, St John.
The Chronicle, Halifax.

The independent newspaper press of the country, without exception, is also supporting Union Government, including the following daily papers of national reputation

The World, Vancouver.
The Tribune, Winnipeg.
The Citizen, Ottawa.
The Star, Montreal.
The Herald, Hamilton.

Now, why do all these Liberal premiers, leaders and newspapers oppose Sir Wilfrid Laurier and support Union Government?

Why do these men and these newspapers oppose Sir Wilfrid after giving him loyal support for many years?

Is it possible that Laurier and his Quebec lieutenants, Lavergne, Bourassa and Lemieux, have the right war policy for Canada and that all these other men and newspapers are wrong?

Ask yourself these questions and do your own thinking.

Published by the Publicity Committee of the Union Government Candidate for London.

THIS ADVERTISEMENT WAS REFUSED INSERTION AT ANY PRICE BY THE ADVERTISER.

London Free Press, November 29, 1917.

The London Advertiser, representing the only newspaper spokesman for Liberalism in Ontario, viewed the new government somewhat differently. It saw Union Government as not truly representative of a national coalition of political parties but as a patchwork government:

The long-drawn and desperate attempts of Premier Borden to bring about "Union Government" have not resulted in a Union Government. A Union Government as most people understand it, would mean the merging of Government and the Opposition into one organization which would operate the legislative machinery of the Country. This has not been accomplished, although prominent Liberals have been sworn into cabinet positions.⁷

The Advertiser in an attempt to discredit the new government described the Liberal participants -- Rowell, Calder, Sifton and Crerar -- as individuals representing a Liberal minority who had never "taken part in the deliberation of the party as a national institution." Other Liberals like C.C. Ballantyne, director of the Canada Cement Company, were labelled lusty capitalists, and erstwhile traitors of the Liberal party in 1911. Denunciation of Union Government as a disguised Tory party, and the strong allegation that Union Government was the lackey of the business hierarchy became the twin issues of Laurierite Liberals in the electoral campaign. Conscription was kept in the background.

On 18 October the recently formed Union Government released its election manifesto. The brief document declared first that Union Government had been inspired by the "urgent necessity" to relegate personal considerations and partisan politics to the background in order to permit interested individuals of both political parties to unite in the endeavor to promote measures essential to the successful prosecution of the war,

⁷London Advertiser, October 13, 1917.

and second, that Union Government was formed to resolve those domestic problems which would arise in the post-bellum period. The manifesto committed Union Government to "the vigorous prosecution of the war, the maintenance of Canada's effort by the provision of necessary reinforcements, the immediate enforcement of the Military Service Act, and the most thorough co-operation with the Governments of the United Kingdom and of the other Dominions in all matters relating to the war."⁸ Other policies espoused by the Government included Civil Service reform, extension of the franchise to women, taxation of war profits, increased income taxes, vigorous immigration and colonization policies, effective arrangements for demobilization, development of transportation facilities, reduction of public expenditure, elimination of profiteering, and encouragement of agricultural organization. Union Government eventually elaborated in greater detail upon these policies in a second manifesto issued on 11 November.

2. Laurier's Manifesto

On 4 November, three weeks after Borden's manifesto, Laurier submitted his political program to the nation. The documentation of the Liberal platform was a masterful attempt to avoid antagonizing the least number of Liberal conscriptionists, to attract the protest vote resulting from the Conservative mismanagement of the economy during the war years, and to satisfy the anti-conscriptionist elements in the country. As to Canadian participation in the conflict Laurier declared that his adminis-

⁸Borden Papers, Manifesto to the nation, October 18, 1917. 41474.
Refer to Appendix 2 for complete text of the manifesto.

tration would devotedly and vigorously promote every aspect of Canadian involvement:

The first duty of a Laurier administration would be to find the men, money and resources necessary to insure the fullest measure of support to our heroic soldiers at the front and to enable Canada to continue to the very end to do her splendid part to win the war.⁹

To win the support of anti-conscriptionist Liberals the party platform opposed the Military Service Act on the grounds that it did not undertake to conscript the wealth of the nation, and that it had not received the approval of the people:

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 pledge myself forthwith to submit the act to the people, and with my followers to carry out the wishes of the majority of the nation thus expressed.¹⁰

Also, in the manifesto Laurier placed the blame of French-Canadian indifference to recruiting at Sir Robert Borden's door step, recalling how the Conservative party conspired with the Nationalists in Quebec in 1911 to defeat the naval policy of the Liberal party by the vicious insinuation that Laurier's plan meant conscription in the advent of any war in which Britain should be involved. Sir Wilfrid argued that French Canadians, as well as the masses of English Canadians, had not been properly educated to the acceptance of compulsory military service. Sir Wilfrid declared that he preferred persuasion over coercion in the matter of enlisting men and that if given the opportunity his

⁹London Advertiser, Laurier's Manifesto, November 5, 1917.

¹⁰Ibid., November 5, 1917. See Appendix 3.

administration would revive the spirit of voluntarism.

Laurier's political overture to mollify the growing discontent of the labor and farm groups in the country was embodied in a series of projected economic and domestic reforms. It was promised that a Liberal administration would reduce the high cost of living by eliminating the profiteering that had plagued the nation while Sir Robert Borden had been in power. If necessary a new Liberal government would implement the principle of government control over all food-producing factories, on the understanding that food production was as essential a contribution as military manpower in the winning of the war. The manifesto further proposed that the tariff wall on agricultural implements and other necessities for farm production would be removed to alleviate the burden on the farmer. Other tariff revisions included the abrogation of both the seven and half per cent increase on all non-British goods, and the five per cent hike on British goods that had been imposed by the Borden Government at the outbreak of war.

In addition to Laurier's desire to establish a new economic order, the manifesto revealed the Liberal chieftain's condemnation of the Conservative Government's Franchise Bill and its intended purchase of the Canadian Northern Railway. As to the former question Sir Wilfrid remarked that

The Government has discarded that fundamental principle of the institution of a free people. They have designingly 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 . . . victory for themselves, a permanent injury to the country.

This act, known as the war-times election act, is a blot upon every instinct of justice, honesty and fair play.¹¹

The manifesto also took odds with the purchase of the Canadian Northern Railway by the Borden Government not in principle but rather on the grounds that the Government had decided to institute an arbitration board to determine the value of worthless northern stock. The Liberal party's emphasis on the economic problems facing the country was probably linked with its desire to divert public attention away from the more volatile issue of conscription.

Newspaper reaction to Sir Wilfrid's manifesto was, as might be expected, generally unfavorable. For the most part the Liberal program was interpreted as a dismal failure to detract public attention from the real issue at stake. The Ottawa Citizen described the manifesto as "a bid of extraordinary force for political power", but it fell short of popular admiration and endorsement "because Sir Wilfrid Laurier is not free to pledge the complete mobilization of all Canada's manpower and resources for united war service. . . ."¹² Laurier's referendum proposal was ridiculed as a dilatory tactic designed only to confuse the electorate. English Canadians in Ontario were reminded that the Liberal manifesto explicitly demonstrated that Laurier would not rest until the Military Service Act was repealed, to the detriment of the Canadian soldiers at

¹¹Ibid., November 5, 1917.

¹²Laurier's private papers reveal that O.D. Skelton had the Liberal chieftain's ear while the party's manifesto was in the making. Laurier's Papers, O.D. Skelton to Laurier, October 29, 1917. 197833-197835.

The above quote is taken from Ottawa Citizen, November 6, 1917.

the front:

So here we have Laurier's win-the-war policy
in four words -- namely, no more Canadian
soldiers.
Let the men at the front die unsupported.
Let the Canadian army disappear.
Let the Germans win while we grow fat at
home.
Let France be smashed.
Let the British empire take its chances.
Do you propose to stand for it, British
Canadians?¹³

In contrast, the London Advertiser extolled the Laurierite program and accepted with implicit faith Laurier's pledge of providing the men, money and resources necessary to the winning of the war without resorting to conscription. The Advertiser, representative of the Anglo-Saxon Laurierites, had no real deep aversion to the principle of conscription, but its devotion to party principles and its abhorrence of "Bordenism" coupled with its adoration of Sir Wilfrid as party mentor, made it an implacable opponent of Union Government.¹⁴ The charisma of Laurier and devotion to the party banner, not the anti-conscription policy of Sir Wilfrid, maintained the semblance of a Liberal party in Ontario.

¹³Ottawa Journal, November 6, 1917.

¹⁴This attitude of non-hostility to conscription can be detected in the editorials of the Advertiser. It saw no incompatibility between loyalty to party and supporting conscription:
It is to be regretted that many Liberal candidates who have gone over to the side of Union could not see their way clear to stand as Liberals, reserving the right to vote any way they chose on matters having to do with military reinforcements.
London Advertiser, October 25, 1917.

3. The London Advertiser And The Liberal Campaign.

The election campaign as conducted by the Advertiser, the only daily newspaper in Ontario which supported the Laurierite program, assumed a negative tone in defending and promoting Liberalism in the province. Indulgence in the condemnation of "Bordenism", rather than emphasis on Liberal policies governed the Advertiser's approach to the election campaign. A vow of silence on the conscription issue was strictly adhered to. The political strategy of the exponents of Liberalism in Western Ontario was to arouse the latent dissatisfaction that had grown in the country during the war years as a result of the alleged mismanagement of the nation's welfare by the Borden regime. Western Ontario, a fertile ground for Liberalism in the past, responded in a limited way to the Advertiser's call for protest against "Bordenism".

The Liberal campaign in Ontario began by denouncing Union Government as a spurious and masquerading entity controlled by the corrupt Conservatism of Sir Robert Borden. In the final week of the campaign the Advertiser distilled this basic abhorrence of Union Government in most vivid terms:

. . . by whatever name the Borden Government of Canada is parading today, "Unionist" or "Win-the-War" party, there is no change in the stench it leaves in the nostrils of Canadians. As the Leopard cannot change its spots, as the rose cannot change its smell, no matter its name, and as the skunk remains a skunk, whether under a Latin appellation or one of common English, so, too, does Bordenism hold its own place and remains Bordenism to the end, despite disguise of name.¹⁵

¹⁵London Advertiser, December 11, 1917.

When local Conservative candidates obstructed the nomination of Liberal Unionists, as in the Ontario constituencies of Lambton and Brant, the Laurierite newspaper seized the opportunity to indict Union Government as nothing but a "Tory trap".¹⁶

Another favorite battle cry of Liberalism in the election campaign was the sweeping accusation that the Unionist party was a puppet of the capitalist class. In announcing the candidature of George S. Gibbons, a Liberal candidate endorsed by organized labor for the constituency of London, the Advertiser in a front page spread heralded the event as a powerful blow against the parasitic plutocracy:

Labor and Liberalism in London have joined hands to accomplish the overthrow of the interests that have dominated Canada at the expense of the common people.¹⁷

The Advertiser failed to mention that George S. Gibbons, although endorsed by the local Trades and Labor Council, was himself a wealthy member of the capitalist class and a corporation lawyer whose company had the monopoly of natural gas in the London area. The Conservative newspaper in London declared that labor was kissing the hand of capital.¹⁸

The Advertiser took great pains to ally Union Government with the unpopular image of Sir Joseph Flavelle, often referred to as the "Bacon King" because of his alleged profiteering activities in the bacon industry

¹⁶Ibid., November 1, 1917.

¹⁷Ibid., October 20, 1917.

¹⁸London Free Press, October 23, 1917.

during the war years. Although Union Government had pledged itself to put an end to all profiteering in the future, the Advertiser was unconvinced of its sincerity. The Advertiser claimed that public outcry had forced the new government to adopt adequate measures to stifle profiteering, not Borden's desire for justice. Sir Joseph Flavelle, it was argued, had not turned away "in wrath from his friends" but remained loyal to them because he realized that if Laurier should come to power his profits would be even more greatly diminished:

Sir Joseph is still behind Sir Robert and Sir Thomas (White). In them lies his hope. The reconstructed government is the same old institution somewhat disguised.¹⁹

Sir Robert Borden's decision to nationalize the Canadian Northern Railway was also interpreted by Laurierites as a nefarious piece of crooked legislation designed primarily to feed the avarice of the capitalists at the expense of the common people. In August, prior to the prorogation of Parliament, a government report had determined that the C.N.R.'s stock, because of the heavy financial obligations it had incurred, had no longer any cash value. In light of this report the Borden Government decided to have the value of the stock appraised by arbitration. It was later stipulated that the sum to be arrived at through arbitration to be paid for the stock was not to exceed ten million dollars. To the chagrin of the Liberal opposition in parliament the C.N.R. Bill was forced through the House of Commons by the use of closure in the last week of August 1917. As a result, in the election campaign the

¹⁹London Advertiser, November 29, 1917.

exponents of Liberalism made the C.N.R. "deal" a big issue on the grounds that the Borden Government had peremptorily decided to dish out millions of dollars to profiteers for worthless stock.²⁰ The railway muddle that Sir Robert Borden had to contend with had been a legacy of the Laurier administration, and in the election campaign of 1917 Laurier exerted every effort to take advantage of a situation which he had helped to create. To counteract the vicious attacks of Laurierites the London Free Press revealed that in 1914 Laurier had moved a resolution in the House of Commons which advocated the same policy that Borden had employed in nationalizing the C.N.R., and that Sir Wilfrid had "placed upon the value of that stock a limit, not of ten million dollars but of sixty million dollars."²¹

Another criticism of Union Government upon which the opposition focussed its attention was the new franchise act that Sir Robert Borden had enforced prior to the calling of the general election. While Conservatives and Liberal conscriptionists alike justified the act as a war measure or remained reticent on the question, the Liberal opposition saw it as a flagrant abuse of the rights of citizenship for the purpose of attaining political power. It was argued by Laurierites that

The franchise act of a Country is the basis,
the cornerstone of government by the people.
If the franchise act is unjust the parliament by it does not justly represent the
people.

²⁰Ibid., November 6, 1917.

²¹London Free Press, November 8, 1917.

It is to be hoped that Sir Wilfrid Laurier will be returned with a majority of Parliament supporting him to remedy this wrong and to rebuke the wrong doers.²²

As already mentioned, the personality of Laurier as leader of the Liberal party for over twenty years was a powerful force which salvaged the Liberal party from total extinction in Ontario in the election of 1917. His image and accomplishments were revered almost to the point of idolatry. To a large degree Liberals based their campaign on their chieftain's past record:

Let Laurier lead. Let him who has all his life "worn the white flower of a blameless life" again guide and control the future of Canada. . . Let Laurier lead. When premier of Canada a prosperity never before came to it.

Let Laurier lead. He has carried the Liberal banner for nearly half a century and kept it unstained.²³

It was proudly asserted that Liberalism stood for justice and national unity:

Liberalism marches under a banner bearing the words "Justice to All." Allegiance to that motto will make for the national unity demanded by the times. Allegiance to the present ruling dynasty will make for an unsafe structure upon which to build the future.²⁴

In the last week of the election campaign the Advertiser in a last ditch attempt to rally support for Laurierite Liberals announced the following news item:

²²London Advertiser, November 26, 1917.

²³Ibid., November 19, 1917.

²⁴Ibid., November 29, 1917.

S.O.S. SENT OUT; SOLDIERS VOTE SLIPS

Unionist Editors Attempt To Stem Tide
Of Feeling Against Borden Among Over-
seas Forces.

Illuminating Telegram From Pearson Of
Halifax Chronicle To Atkinson of Toronto
Star Declares Resentment Among Soldiers
Over Treatment And Feeling Against Premier
"Is Likely To Result In Their Voting Very
Strongly Against Union Government" -- Pro-
posal Made That Liberal-Unionist Papers
Send Appeal To Be Printed In English News-
papers.²⁵

The degree of discontent among the Canadian armed troops over-
seas was exaggerated. Liberal newspaper editors had sent a telegram to
the Canadian armed forces in Europe on 6 December to assure them of the
national character of Union Government and to outline the new government's
underlying policy "of securing support for the troops in the field." This
was not an extraordinary political procedure; it was merely means of pro-
moting Union Government as Sir Wilfrid Laurier had done to advance the
Liberal cause by sponsoring party advertisement in British newspapers.²⁶

During the election campaign in Ontario Sir Wilfrid Laurier
did very little personal electioneering in the province. He left the
Liberal candidates to fend for themselves, visiting few constituencies
in the province outside of Toronto and Ottawa. A possible explanation
for Laurier's aloofness is related to his belief that the Liberal party
would receive meagre support from the Ontario community. Furthermore,
it would seem that Laurier allowed great latitude for individual candi-

²⁵Ibid., (front page headline) December 7, 1917.

²⁶Hopkins, The Canadian Annual Review 1917. 634.

dates to manage their own election campaigns, leaving each candidate to decide for himself what line of action should be followed. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's permissiveness can best be seen in his repeated declarations to party members that a Liberal's espousal of conscription was not incongruous with party allegiance.

The monumental deterrent to a successful Liberal election campaign in 1917 is to be found in the pervasive lack of support from the news media. For the most part, pro-Laurierite ideas were virtually contrabanded from public consumption. With only one daily newspaper in the province sympathetic to Laurier, the Liberal program received very little favorable exposure. One of Laurier's disciples informed the Liberal leader of the boycott of Liberal ideology in the province:

The situation in Ontario at the present moment is an organized attempt on the part of the financial institutions in the city (Toronto) with the newspapers, to prevent any kind of publication of our side of the question.²⁷

Lack of organization and the scarcity of Liberal candidates were two other nettlesome weaknesses that the Liberal party experienced during the election campaign. The wholesale desertion of Liberals from the party coupled with the widespread movement on the part of local Liberal and Conservative associations to unite in common action deprived Laurier of many of his erstwhile political supporters. In a letter to an associate on 26 October Laurier betrayed the party's weakness:

²⁷Laurier Papers, Harding to Laurier, October 22, 1917. 197719.

The difficulty on our side is to find candidates. We are all disorganized and the only thing to do is to suggest that every riding should choose a candidate without waiting for the Reform Association Office.²⁸

A month later, as the election campaign was drawing to a close, the same problems still plagued the Liberal party. George S. Gibbon, Liberal candidate for London, wrote of the pressing difficulties he was encountering:

I am sorry about South Wellington but every time we got a man in the field he was pulled out by some means or other. Time after time we got a man out and each time influence of some kind or other was brought to bear to pull him off. . .

I was just talking to Mr. Dewart on the telephone in regard to speaking in Western Ontario and he stated that the question of his going West was in consideration at Ottawa. I certainly hope that Mr. Dewart will be left in Ontario this campaign. We are putting up a great fight against heavy odds, and as you know, we are absolutely devoid of speakers. Dewart is practically the only man, with occasional help from Sir Allen Aylesworth, whom we have to help in the fight. I trust that if at all possible Dewart will be spared to us here.²⁹

Laurier, realizing the almost hopeless situation of attracting any kind of strong support in Ontario, decided in the last week of November to make a bid for the vote of Western Canada by personally going to the hustings in that region of the country.

In the last two weeks of the election campaign the Advertiser continued with dogged determination to voice the cause of Liberalism, focusing its attention on the past records of Borden and Sir Wilfrid Laurier:

²⁸Ibid., Laurier to Harding, October 26, 1917. 197720.

²⁹Ibid., G.S. Gibbons to Laurier, November 21, 1917. 198553.

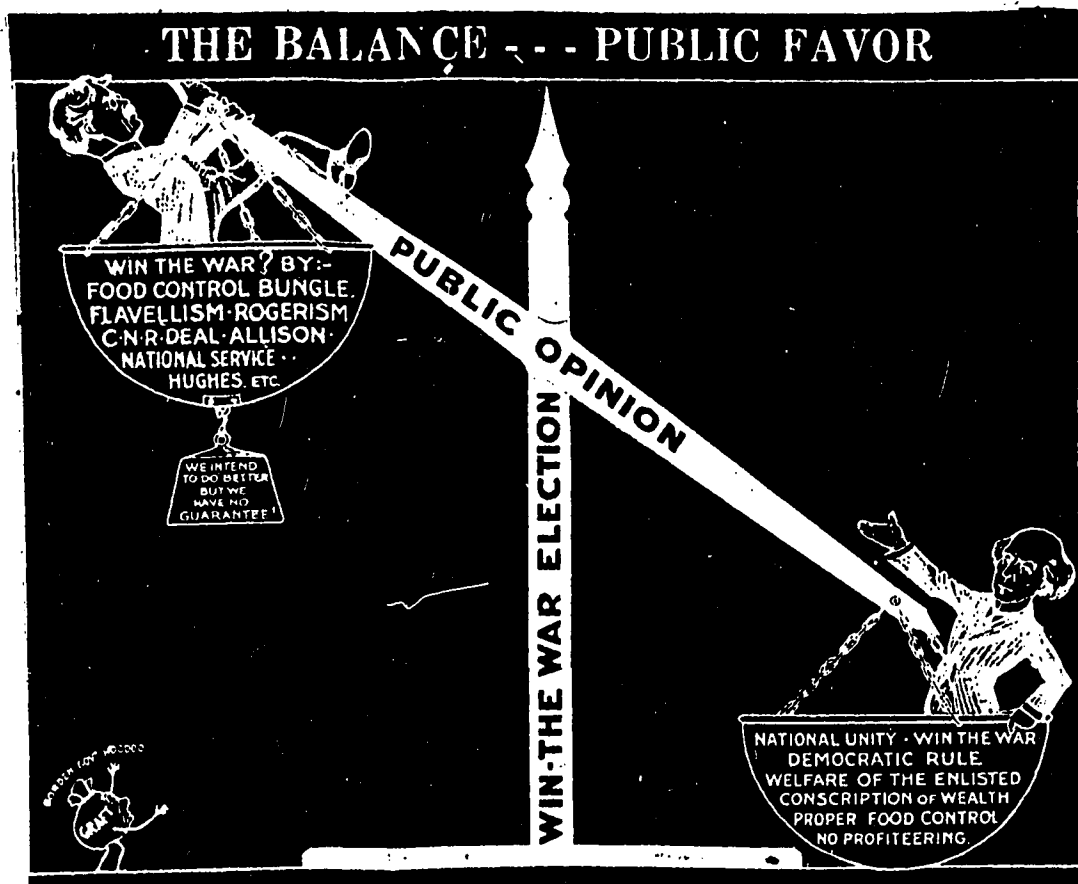
FORGET. That is the prayer of the Borden candidate, wherever he is found, makes to the electorate. It is the supplication of the Borden press.

REMEMBER. That is the appeal and advice of the Liberal candidate and Liberal press.

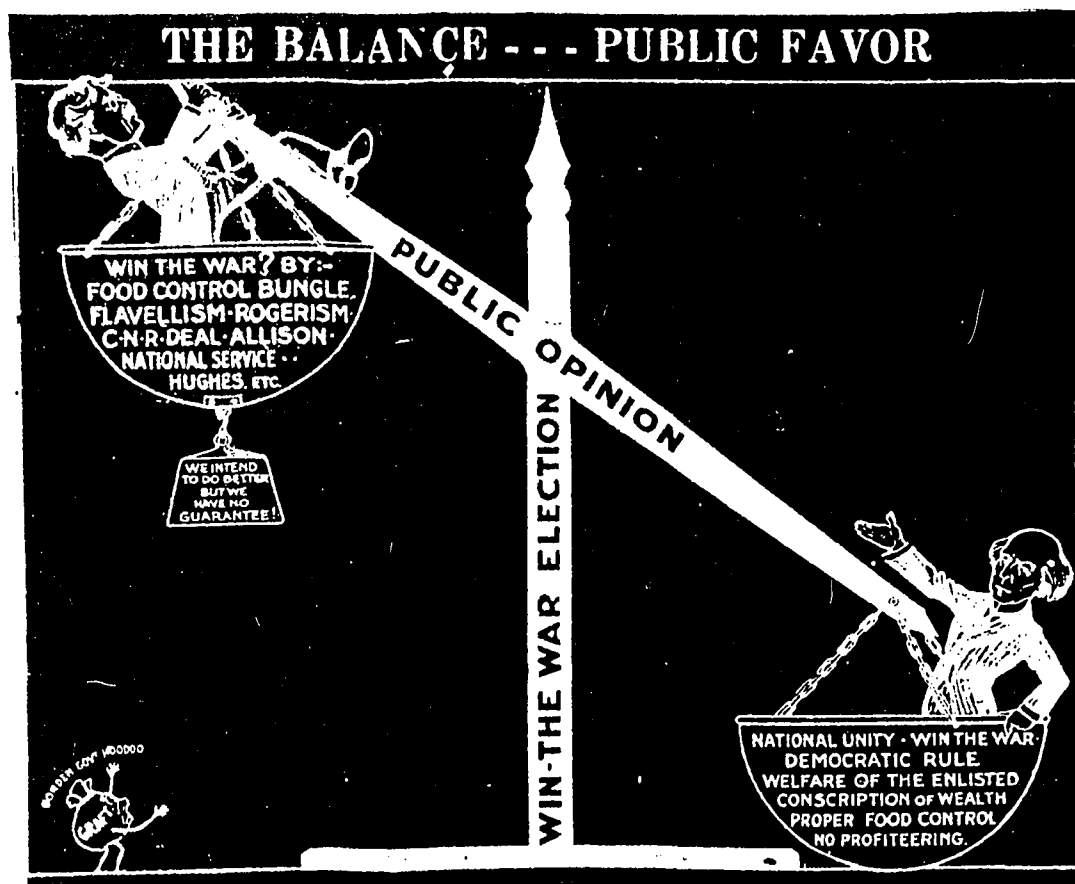
FORGET, say Borden and his followers, the graft, profiteering, trickery, intrigue, mismanagement, obstruction of recruiting and the handing over of the people to the moneyed interests. To the soldier, they say. FORGET the past, the injustices, the favoritism, the Ross rifle and the poor equipment. To both they REMEMBER only that we promise speedy reinforcement of the men at the front without bothering to consult the people, and do not estimate the worth of this promise by that of others we have made. Concentrate your mental powers of forgetting.

REMEMBER, say Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberals, everything. REMEMBER not only the past of the Borden Government but our past. REMEMBER all the Conservatives would have you FORGET and anything they ask you to recall. Put no trust in FORGETFULNESS and put all in REMEMBRANCE. REMEMBER what we have done, how we have fought the schemes which were planned to rob Canadians of their right, the franchise. REMEMBER that we exposed, for the nation's sake, the rottenness of the Borden administration and forced some improvement. REMEMBER Sir Wilfrid's past promises and how faithfully he kept them. REMEMBER his steadfastness and firmness and compare them with the spinelessness and wabbling of Premier Borden. REMEMBER 1911 and the Nationalist-Conservative coalition. REMEMBER Borden's cabinet. REMEMBER Sir Wilfrid had promised Canada's ultimate effort to win the war and take care of the soldiers and their dependents. FORGET nothing. In which man can the Canadian voter trust, the one who asks his support based on FORGETFULNESS, or the man who seeks it based on REMEMBRANCE.³⁰

³⁰London Advertiser, December 1, 1917.



London Advertiser, December 7, 1917.



London Advertiser, December 7, 1917.

As election day approached the Advertiser assumed an optimistic attitude, predicting that the Liberal party would sweep the country with a majority of fifty seats. This optimism had its source in the warm reception that Western Canada had extended to Laurier while campaigning in that region, and in the Advertiser's belief that the soldiers would vote overwhelmingly for Laurier. Since neither of these two expectations were realized, the Advertiser's prognostication proved to be grossly inaccurate. The election returns painfully convinced the Advertiser that

The Canadian people have declared for the enforcement of the Conscription act. No matter by what means that verdict was secured, the fact now presented to the country is that clear mandate has been given to Premier Borden to proceed with his measure for securing of reinforcements.³¹

Although the London Advertiser had sidestepped the conscription issue during the campaign, in the aftermath of the electoral contest it admitted that the central issue of the election had been conscription. The Advertiser, however, found some consolation in defeat. Five of the seventeen constituencies in Western Ontario, where it had publicized the Liberal program, voted Liberal.

4. Conscription The Only Issue.

The issue of conscription dominated the Unionist election campaign as conducted by both Liberal and Conservative newspapers in the province of Ontario. The news media transformed the election of

³¹Ibid., December 19, 1917.

1917 into a referendum. The Ontario electorate was given one of two choices: either to support or reject the Military Service Act. The wholesale defection of Liberal newspapers to the camp of Union Government made it virtually impossible for Liberalism to offer the Ontario electorate a convincing alternative outside of those constituencies where conscriptionist Liberals ran as candidates. Thus the blackout of Liberal views reinforced the public impression that the election was simply a plebiscite on the question of compulsory military service.

From the very beginning of the election campaign Unionist advocates warned the Ontario electorate not to be misled by the dilatory tactics of Laurier's program:

Beware of the politicians who are craftily seeking to distract attention from the war issue by talking about profiteers, "conscription of wealth," and the high cost of living. This election is going to be different from any other election ever held in this country. There will be no fiscal or other economic or domestic issue before the people. The only issue will be: shall we place in power in the Dominion of Canada for the next four or five years a Government composed of men of British instinct and purpose and prepared to keep faith with the boys who have gone overseas, or a Government chosen from a party who have shown by their conduct that they are willing to have Canada play poltroon in the war, and that they are not prepared to keep faith with the boys overseas and back them up with the reinforcements they require.³²

Both Liberal and Conservative newspapers called for a political truce, urging Liberals and Conservatives alike to put aside their predilections and join hands in a common endeavor to promote the spirit

³²Ottawa Journal, November 3, 1917.

of Union Government. The Toronto Globe preached the dangers of division among the pro-conscriptionist vote. To split the conscriptionist vote along party lines would make way inevitably for a Laurier victory.³³

At the same time the importance of the woman vote was stressed, and women were exhorted to respond actively and patriotically to their newly acquired right.³⁴

The chauvinistic response of the press in English Canada to the conscription issue during the election campaign was governed by a spirit of nationalism. The enforcement of the Military Service Act, was looked upon as the ultimate assurance of defending the territorial integrity of the country from the "Hun", and as the supreme method of maintaining Canadian honor untarnished in the eyes of the world. The Globe repeatedly voiced this latter feeling:

It would be an irreparable moral calamity if Canada should falter in the great trust which she has hitherto so nobly fulfilled at the cost of her bravest blood. By the spirit of her people and the valour of her sons in battle she has won a place in the glorious company of free nations leagued against the barbarism which would crush liberty and civilization under its iron heel.³⁵

The London Free Press articulated the same viewpoint, alluding to the tension that would result between Canada and the United States if conscription were rejected by the nation:

³³Toronto Globe, November 22, 1917.

³⁴Ibid., November 24, 1917.

³⁵Ibid., November 26, 1917; also December 6, 1917.

If Canada desires to take a referendum upon the question, whether or not to support our soldiers and allies further in the war, and if the referendum is decided against that support, this country, like Russia will be placed by Washington in the list of unfriendly nations. . .

If we betray the cause for which the United States entered the war -- and we welcomed them into it -- they will turn upon us as the rivals of their righteous indignation and wrath. They will regard us as poltroons and cowards.

Canadians hold their heads high today. They are a justly proud race. They are a valiant people. They have not spared themselves in the cause of civilization. What will be their degradation and shame if in the end they prove a cowardly and traitorous people? The thought is too horrible. Yet that is the possibility that confronts the Canadian voter as he goes to the polls on December 17 next.³⁶

While every effort was devoted to publicizing the war program of the Unionist Government, the domestic policies and reforms of the new Borden administration received adequate exposure. The Unionist Government was characterized by its adherents as a regenerated political organization, divorced totally from the old Borden government. The Conscriptivist Liberal newspaper firmly vouched for the political integrity of the new party because such staunch Liberal reformers as Frank Carvell and J.A. Calder were at the helm of the party. However, excessive attention to this aspect of Union Government was avoided in order to permit the issue of conscription to remain constantly in the lime-light of public discussion.

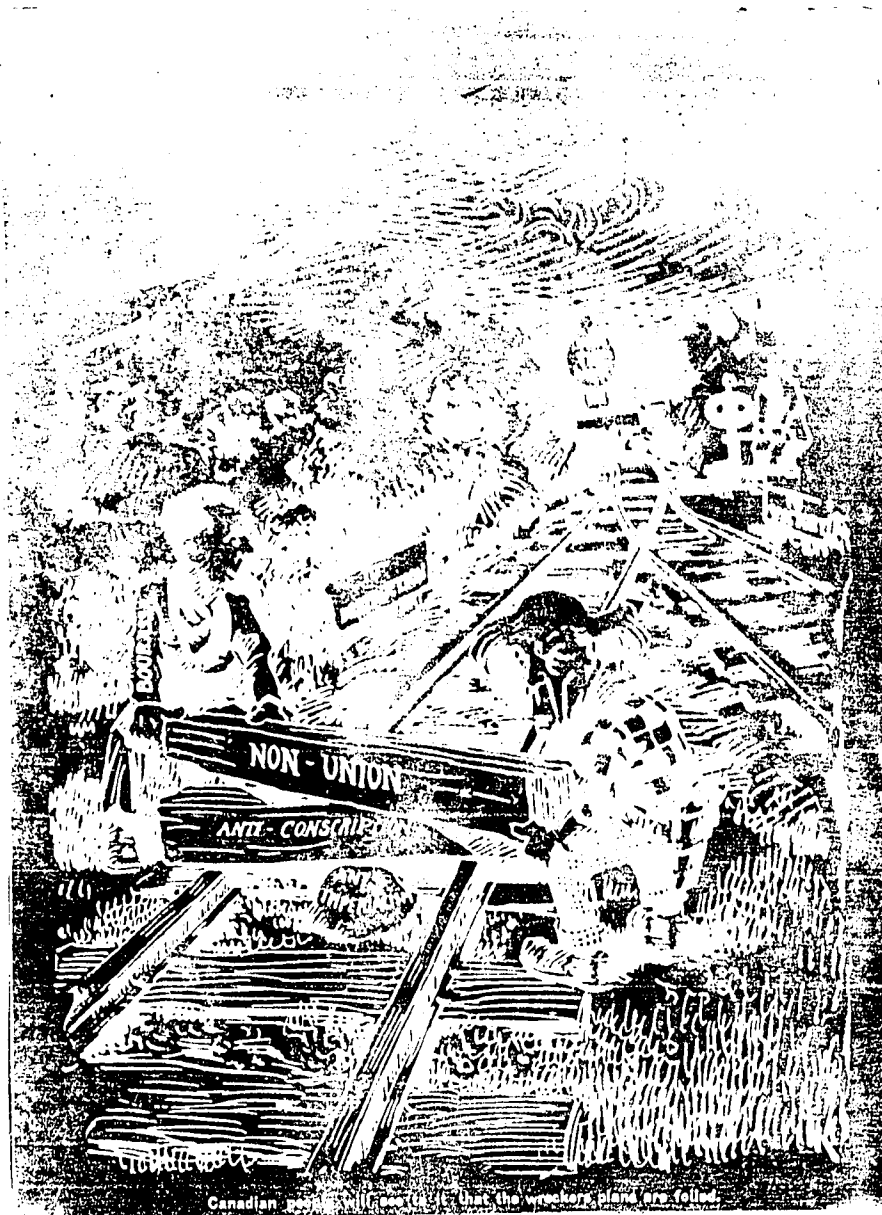
The derogatory and at times vicious assault directed at the image and ideas of Sir Wilfrid Laurier served as a powerful weapon in the promotion of Union Government. Sir Wilfrid was depicted generally as an seditious, conniving, Quebec-controlled party politician whose only goal

³⁶London Free Press, November 26, 1917; also refer to Ottawa Citizen, December 11, 1917 for similar comments.



Canadian people will see to it that the wreckers plans are foiled.

Calgary Herald, December 5, 1917.



Calgary Herald, December 5, 1917.

in forcing an election was to obtain political power. This image of Laurier emerges strikingly from a series of cartoons published by most Unionist papers in the autumn of 1917. In the majority of cases he was either portrayed as an arrogant monarch with Henri Bourassa, the Quebec nationalist leader as his chief adviser, or as a senile and befuddled politician who lamentably lacked the physical and moral fibre needed to arrive at imperative and quick decisions.

The most scurrilous innuendo hurled at Laurier's character was the Unionist suggestion that the Kaiser supported the Laurierite program. One cartoon depicted a cluster of German soldiers gleefully reading with obvious approval the Laurierite manifesto. Consistent with Unionist campaign, as conducted by the more rabid exponents of Union Government, the London Free Press openly allied Laurier's election campaign with enemy alien support:

This is not an election. The Hun has come to Canada to capture this country. . .

The Hun is not only at the gate; he is inside the gate.

He is using his devices to divide the Canadian people against themselves.

The poison gas of partisan politics is being employed by the Hun to divert their minds from the war. . .

Look at Quebec and examine for yourself what is taking place there. A Union supporter hardly dare show his head.

See what happened at Kitchner. Was that an accident. Do men gather in organized mobs by accident?

How cunning is the Overlord of Berlin.

Canadian workingmen are urged to believe that their interest in this election is the price of bacon. But the German autocrats are only waiting for the opportunity to snatch away from them all profitable labor and to transfer industrial control to Germany. . .



London Free Press, December 1, 1917.



London Free Press, December 1, 1917.

The Kaiser has won his game in Canada
thus far; he has forced an election. Now
he is out to win the election

EVERY VOTE CAST FOR LAURIER CANDIDATE
IS A VOTE CAST FOR THE KAISER.

Because --

Every vote polled for Laurier is a
vote for division.

Every vote polled for Laurier is a
vote for delay.³⁷

As the election campaign drew to a close, the anti-Quebec feeling in Ontario became increasingly pronounced. The stentorian cry -- "Is a United Quebec to Rule All Canada?" -- was heard across the province of Ontario and across the nation. Under this alarming headline the following note was added to the Unionist message:

To-day in our national crisis, Quebec alone
among all the provinces stands more united
than ever before. She knows what she wants:

- (1) Withdrawal from the war
- (2) Bilingual schools everywhere
- (3) Weakening the ties of British connection
- (4) Political control of Canada

From the Ottawa River to Labrador and the
Gulf, a common purpose actuates Quebec in
her determination to profit by the factional
divisions of Canada and to impose her
will upon all the people of Canada.³⁸

The unofficial alliance between Bourassa and Laurier was played up as a French-Canadian conspiracy to pull Canada out of the war, to bring dishonor and shame to a country which had so valiantly spilled her blood for the cause of freedom and civilization. The anti-Quebec bias in English Canada inestimably contributed to the success of Union Government in 1917. Although generally not admitted at the time, English Canadians implicitly understood that the conscription Act was directed at French Canada. Conse-

³⁷Ibid., November 30, 1917.

³⁸Toronto Globe, December 11, 1917.

quently, many Anglo-Saxon Canadians who were determined to see French Canada carry a proportionate burden of the national war effort were invariably induced to vote for Union Government.

While Laurier generally had avoided personal campaigning in Ontario, Sir Robert Borden accompanied by Newton Rowell undertook an extensive tour of Western Ontario in the last week of November. Sir Robert Borden's first speech on the hustings set the tone for his other campaign speeches delivered at various points in Western Ontario including London, Hamilton, Kitchener, Dundas, Stratford and Windsor. In Toronto on 22 November when the Unionist campaign drive was launched with rousing popular support, the Prime Minister summarized the main planks of the Unionist platform:

Our first and paramount duty is the victorious prosecution of the war and the support of the Canadian army at the front. Closely associated is the duty of making just and adequate provisions for the dependents of those who have fallen, for the support of those who have been wounded, for the training and re-education of those who desire to engage in new occupations, for settlement upon the land, for opportunities of employment to those who desire to engage in industrial occupations, for the promotion on immigration, and for the general development of the country.³⁹

Newton Rowell on the same platform with Borden set forth the main issue of the election:

If you think we have done enough and if you think of quitting the war you have an alternative to Union Government. But if you are in favor of supporting our men at the front by necessary reinforcement and legislative measures in order that this war be carried through a victorious conclusion, then I would say to all sin-

³⁹Ibid., November 22, 1917.

cerely, you have no alternative to Union Government.⁴⁰

Next to the issue of conscription emphasis was given to the Union Government's program calling for the elimination of profiteering by government control of food and packing houses and by the taxation of profits. Throughout the campaign tour in Western Ontario Rowell and Borden, frequently escorted on the platform by wounded soldiers, first appealed to the people's patriotism, urging Canadians to support conscription and the men at the front, and second, touched upon question of a domestic nature, promising the extension of the franchise to women and greater labor representation in the new government. For the most part Sir Robert Borden's campaign in Ontario focused on the issue of conscription, relegating the domestic questions into the background.

The Prime Minister's election tour of Western Ontario was marked by two noteworthy occurrences: on 25 November the Prime Minister was howled down and prevented from addressing a public meeting in Kitchener by anti-conscriptionists; on the same day General Newburn, Minister of Militia, announced the qualified exemption of farmers from compulsory military service. The former event foreshadowed a considerable anti-Unionist vote in Western Ontario; the latter event assured Union Government of greater support from the farmers in the province.

Although the Unionist forces had been confident of victory, they did not give way to euphoria nor did they slacken their efforts in the promotion of Union Government during the last few days of the election campaign; instead, they fought more desperately than ever. The Ontario electorate was reminded that to vote Liberal was tantamount to national

⁴⁰Ibid., November 22, 1917.

disgrace:

Canada is at the parting of the ways, and the returns on Monday night will show whether the majority of her people are willing to continue on the path of sacrifice, and patriotism, or whether they wish to lie down, and in the language of the prize ring "Take the count."

Disguise it as he may by eloquence and reference to the "soul" of the people, Sir Wilfrid Laurier's policy with regard to the war means nothing more or less than a resolution to "Take the count." A Laurier triumph on Monday will be hailed, not merely in the central empires, but in all entente countries, as a German victory.⁴¹

In contrast, a vote for Union Government was interpreted as a vote for justice, freedom, civilization, Christianity and honor:

By our votes on Monday we can strike for the right and against wrong. We can strike for justice and mercy and decency, and against dishonor between nations, the murdering of children, the outraging of women, the devastation of the sacred shrines of humanity. We can strike for the country's manliness and good name -- perhaps for our very existence as a free country. We can strike for the Union Jack. We can strike for the best of civilization, and for christianity itself. We can strike for these things by our votes on Monday if our votes are cast for Union Government of this country. The other side means the paralysis of Canadian effort, and our National dishonor.⁴²

On 17 December 1917 62.7 per cent of the Ontario electorate cast their vote for Union government, while only 33.7 per cent embraced Laurier's program.⁴³ The defeat of Laurier in Ontario can be attributed

⁴¹London Free Press, December 15, 1917.

⁴²Ottawa Journal, December 15, 1917. Refer to Appendix 4 for lengthy editorial Toronto Globe summarizing the issues of the election.

⁴³A mere 3.6 per cent of the popular vote went to Labor candidates.

to English-Canadian nationalism and dedication to the war. Canadians had travelled too far along the path leading to total war to decide in December 1917 to suddenly halt that progress, fearing that a de-escalation of Canadian participation would inexorably culminate in national dishonor and in the weakening of freedom's crusade. Although Sir Wilfrid Laurier had tried to mitigate the widespread popular fear resulting from his anti-conscriptionist stance by promising Canadians a referendum on the issue, he eventually failed in this move primarily because the Unionist forces had succeeded in portraying Laurier as an implacable opponent of conscription, and as one who would follow the dictates of French Canada and ultimately cause the humiliating withdrawal of Canada from the war, desecrating the glorious deeds of those Canadians who had died for Canada's honor and freedom. In the end, French-Canadian obstinate opposition to conscription only provoked the Anglo-Saxon population to take a more uncompromising posture in the election.

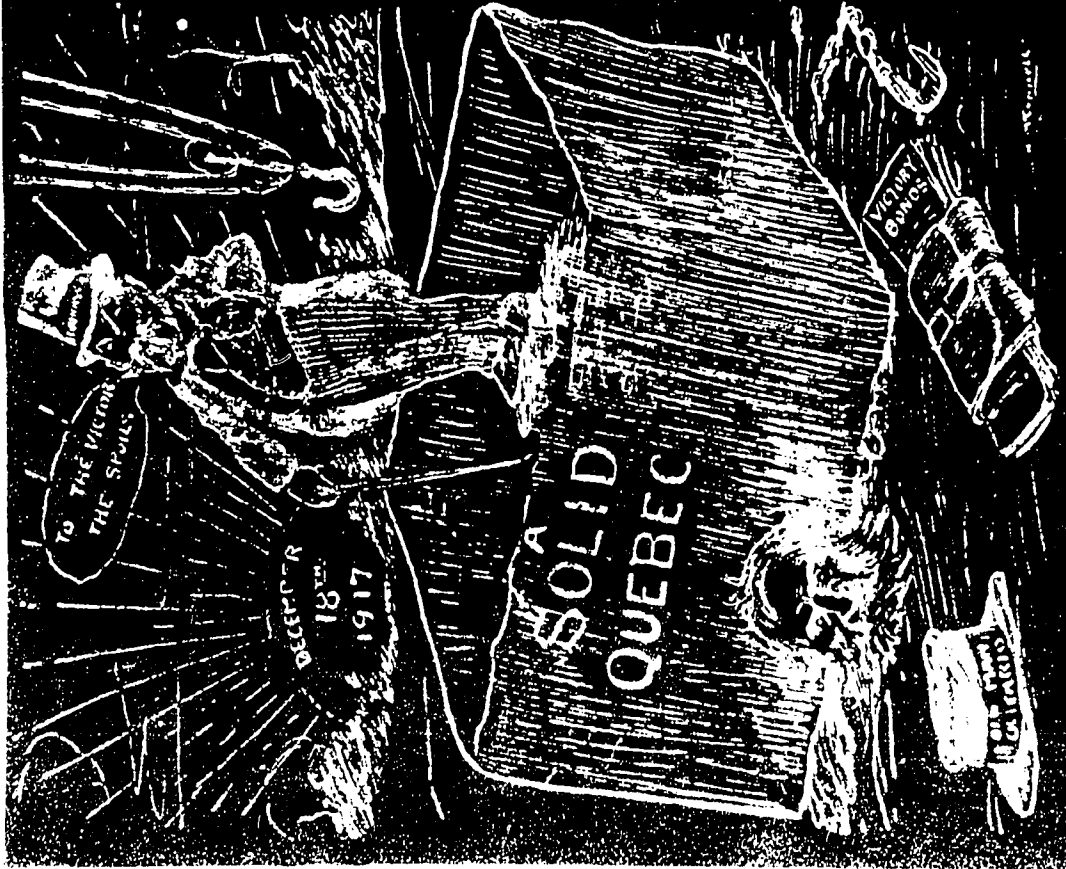
To analyze that portion of the Ontario electorate which voted Liberal in 1917 is to reveal both the nature and extent of Laurier's support in the province. Such an inquiry will lay bare the headlong confrontation of English and French Canadians.

A Solid Quebec Will Vote to Rule All Canada Only a Solid Ontario Can Defeat Them



Citizens' Union Committee

A Solid Quebec Will Vote to Rule All Canada Only a Solid Ontario Can Defeat Them



Citizens' Union Committee

CHAPTER III

ONTARIO RESULTS

While Sir Wilfrid Laurier was on the hustings in Western Canada seeking the support of the Prairie and British Columbia electorates during the last week of the election campaign, his Ontario associates ventured to predict the number of seats that the Liberal party would take in Ontario:

Your committee here has carefully canvassed the province and can assure you twenty-five to thirty seats. . .¹

The election returns proved the expectations of the Liberal party in Ontario to have been most inaccurate. The early returns, not taking into account the military vote, showed the Liberals ahead in only eleven seats. Once the military vote had been tabulated, the Liberals were forced to give up three seats. While Laurier had been surprised at Western Canada's total rejection of the Liberal party, he was not particularly astonished by the Ontario results:

Ontario did not surprise me. Our friends were very confident of electing twenty-five, but it seemed to me that they were over sanguine, and that the racial cry would work its effect.²

The Laurierites, as a whole found it difficult to admit defeat, relating their electoral reversal not to popular rejection of their party,

¹Laurier Papers, Telegram from R.T. Harding to Laurier, December 10, 1917. 198907.

²Ibid., Laurier to George Graham, December 20, 1917. 198983.

but rather to Unionist electoral rigging methods and to contemptible political tricks.³ Claiming to be above reproach, the now basically French-Canadian dominated Liberal party assumed a mentality akin to martyrdom, refusing to accept the election returns as remotely indicative of majority opinion. Laurier lamented his defeat and appointed himself to the office of supreme protector of citizen's right:

It is certainly galling to be defeated by foul methods, and this was the case with us in the last elections. Such a victory, whilst it may be a party triumph for the Conservatives, is a great blow to the unity and prosperity of the country. Our duty is very plain, it is to continue to defend the right as we see it and to endeavor to prevent further mischief being done by the Government.⁴

Even though Sir Robert Borden's electoral methods did not embody the most democratic spirit possible, they did not however fraudulently hand over the reins of power to Union Government as Laurier and his apologists have intimated. In Ontario, the controversial franchise act, specifically designed by the Borden administration for the war-time election of 1917, had insignificant bearing on the Liberal defeat. The vast portion of the German-Canadian electorate in Ontario did not fall

³This mood of disdain can be easily detected in the Laurier Papers: George Graham to Laurier, December 19, 1917; O.D. Skelton to Laurier, December 18, 1917. 198981. 198974.

⁴Ibid., Laurier to Dr. Adam Thomson, December 27, 1917. 199107.

under the terms of the act which disfranchised the enemy alien since most of the electorate of German descent had established itself in Ontario prior to 1901.⁵ The extension of the franchise to the women kin of the Canadian soldiers did contribute definitely to an indeterminable degree to the Unionist victory; however, it did not by any means award the election to Borden. As already mentioned, Union Government had won sixty-nine of the eighty seats in Ontario without the military vote. Since the strength of the military vote, amounting to approximately 185,000 in the province can be equated to the power of the women vote, and since the military vote, with few exceptions, can not be viewed as an undemocratic vote, it would be relatively accurate to regard the women's vote as representative of the soldiers' vote prior to the inclusion of the latter. Sir Robert Borden's partial enfranchisement of the woman population must be interpreted as a political blunder. One can speculate that if Borden had granted total suffrage the outcome of the election in Ontario, if anything, would have been more favorable to the Unionist cause. Borden's policy in regards to women suffrage lacked intensive study and perspicacity, reflecting the government's acute apprehensiveness as to the uncertainty of the political situation prior to the formation of Union Government.

The Liberal defeat in Ontario in 1917 must be interpreted ultimately not as a manipulated electoral decision but rather as a popular rejection of Laurier's program related specifically to the question of conscription. A brief investigation of those Ontario ridings that voted

⁵Population figures tend to show that the large German community in Ontario had migrated to Canada prior to 1901. In 1901 and in 1911 the German population in Ontario totalled respectively 203,319 and 192,320. In the election of 1917 only those aliens who had been born in enemy territory and who had settled in Canada since March 1902 were disfranchised.
Fifth Census 1911.

Liberal in 1917 reveals lucidly the type of electorate that supported Laurier.

1. The French-Canadian Constituencies.

Three of the eight constituencies that voted Liberal in Ontario in 1917 can be considered as French-Canadian dominated ridings: Russell, Prescott and Essex North.

Russell:

Approximately fifty-six per cent of the population of Russell was of French-Canadian descent in 1917.⁶ The constituency had been a Liberal stronghold since Confederation. The Hon. Charles Murphy, a barrister-at-law, a Roman Catholic and the son of an Irish immigrant contested the seat as a Laurierite Liberal in 1917. In September 1908 he had succeeded the Hon. R.W. Scott as Secretary of State and held that portfolio in the Laurier Government until the Liberal defeat of 1911.⁷

On 29 October 1917 at Vars Charles Murphy was unanimously re-nominated as the Laurierite standard bearer in the county of Russell.

⁶According to the 1911 census the ethnic composition of Russell showed that of a total population of 39,434, 22,475 were French Canadians, 15,253 British, and 1,091 German.
Fifth Census 1911.

⁷Ernest Chambers, The Canadian Parliamentary Guide. 1918. All further information pertaining to individual candidates and to constituencies, unless otherwise stated, has been gleaned from the Parliamentary Guide, 1918.

With Rodolphe Lemieux, a prominent French-Canadian politician, at his side, Charles Murphy castigated the Borden administration as "robbers", "boodlers", "flag wavers who have exploited the country in the name of loyalty and patriotism." In his election campaign Murphy ridiculed Union Government as a "camouflage Government" laying emphasis on the past misdeemeanors of the Borden Government:

I resent the title of win-the-war from a batch of scoundrels who form a camouflage and in the meantime sell rotten boots to the soldiers, steal their surgical dressings and profit thereby, stuff bacon with salt and water and sell it at 28 cents per pound, and perform other actions worthy of only unprincipled scoundrels.⁸

Lemieux, speaking on behalf of his political associate, stressed Laurier's anti-conscription policy -- "If Laurier is elected -- and he will be -- conscription will soon be withdrawn."⁹ In mid-November Charles Murphy, angered by newspaper reports that quoted him as saying that Laurier would repeal the Military Service Act if returned to power, clarified his position by declaring that he, as well as Laurier, were in favor of a referendum on the question of conscription. They were not eager to rescind the act unless the nation so commanded.¹⁰

Throughout the election campaign Charles Murphy remained a staunch Laurierite, all the while opposing conscription and vehemently condemning Union Government as "a menace to democracy."¹¹ In turn, the Ottawa Journal had harsh words for the politics of Charles Murphy:

Mr. Murphy and Mr. Lemieux and those who think with them, profess to be in the

⁸ Ottawa Journal, October 31, 1917.

⁹ Ibid., October 31, 1917.

¹⁰ Ottawa Citizen, November 20, 1917.

¹¹ Toronto Globe, November 28, 1917.

war to the end, but in reality all their speeches make it clear that they are in it only to the end of voluntary enlistment.

And the fact that men of the mentality and calibre of Mr. Murphy would dominate any government that Sir Wilfrid Laurier forms, should be a warning to all sincere men who want to see Canada do her best in the war, that the triumph of Laurierism in the forthcoming election would be likely to result in national suicide and infamy, in the triumph of influences which have been eating, like a dry rot, into the heart of this Dominion as a united nation determined to carry on with the war.¹²

The Unionist candidate in the riding was Duncan C. Merkley who explicitly presented himself as a patriotic conscriptionist. He confessed that he had been motivated to run as a Unionist candidate because the forthcoming election involved not "the old-time issue of tariff reforms and other local and national problems" but a more far-reaching issue -- "the very life of our country." In contrasting his own position with that of the Liberal party, D.C. Merkley characterized the Laurierites as "a group of politicians who want Canadians to hang back, want Canadians to wait, want Canadians to lie down and have a sleep for a while."¹³ The Unionist candidate for Russell warned his constituents that if Canadians slumbered while other democratic nations fought, someday they would wake up and find the "Hun" at their doorstep. The lines of battle between the Liberal and Unionist party were clearly drawn in the constituency of Russell, and when the civilian electorate filed to the polls on 17 December it decided in favor of Charles Murphy, the Laurierite Liberal.

From the outset it was generally conceded by the exponents

¹²Ottawa Journal, October 31, 1917.

¹³Ottawa Citizen, November 20, 1917.

of Union Government that Russell, a traditionally Liberal constituency with a French-Canadian majority and headed by an uncompromising and devoted Laurierite, would side inevitably with the Liberal party in the election.¹⁴ The election returns verified this latter contention. Figures showed that Charles Murphy had captured sixty-four per cent of the civilian vote.¹⁵ A definite voting behavioral pattern can be detected in the constituency: the Catholic French-Canadian element voted overwhelmingly for Liberalism while the Protestant Anglo-Saxon community strongly supported Union Government. Proof of this latter trend is evidenced in the fact that three of the four Anglo-Saxon dominated polling divisions rendered favorable majorities for Union Government. The strength of the Unionist vote in these latter polling districts varied with the degree of Anglo-Saxon predominance. In the polling district of Cumberland where Union Government received fifty-two per cent of the popular civilian vote the Anglo-Saxon electorate comprised fifty-four per cent of the combined French and English-Canadian populations. In Osgoode and in Ottawa city Rideau Ward where the Anglo-Saxon population represented respectively ninety-five per cent and sixty-five per cent of the combined French and English population, sixty-two and fifty-five per cent of the electorate cast their vote in favor of Union Government. Similarly, the size of the French-Canadian community governed the extent of the Liberal victories in various polling divisions. All of the six French-Canadian dominated polling divisions gave strong mandates to Charles Murphy. For instance, as in the case of Russell township where

¹⁴ Toronto Globe, October 30, 1917.

¹⁵ Canada, Sessional Papers, 1920 Volume LVII. Hereafter all references made to statistical analysis of election returns for 1917 have been procured and tabulated from the Sessional Papers.

the French-Canadian population was twice the size of the English-speaking community, the election returns reveal that whereas D.C. Merkley had gathered 316 votes, his Liberal adversary had attracted 610 votes. This prominent electoral racial split was manifested throughout the constituency of Russell.¹⁶

Prescott:

The constituency of Prescott, with a seventy-eight per cent French-speaking population, represented the largest French-Canadian dominated riding in the province of Ontario. Consequently the Liberal victory in the constituency also represented the most resounding popular endorsement of the Laurierite program in the province. Seventy-four per cent of the electorate in Prescott voted Liberal in 1917. Besides being a traditionally Liberal stronghold, the riding had been the private political preserve of the Proulx family since 1891. Edmond Proulx, the Quebec-born son of the late Isidore Proulx the Liberal member of parliament for the constituency from 1891 until his death in 1904, contested the federal seat as a straight Laurierite Liberal in 1917 as he had successfully done for the three previous general elections.

The electoral returns for Prescott clearly indicated French-Canadian anathema to conscription and English-Canadian espousal of the Military Service Act. In two of the ten polling districts of the constituency where the English-speaking element prevailed in numbers the polls went Unionist; in the remaining eight predominantly French-Canadian dis-

¹⁶Refer to Appendix 5 for statistical chart of Russel constituency. Also refer to Appendix 6 for a master chart of those constituencies that elected Liberal candidates in 1917.

tricts the Laurierite candidates proved successful.¹⁷

Essex North:

The Liberal party had been triumphant in five of the seven general elections since 1882 in the constituency of Essex North until the reciprocity election of 1911 when the Conservative party emerged victorious with a slim majority of 176 votes. The ethnic make-up of the riding showed that thirty-seven per cent of the populace was French Canadian, nine per cent was of German descent, fifty per cent of English-speaking stock, and the remaining four per cent was composed of other ethnic groups.¹⁸ The victory of the Liberal party in 1917 which had been made possible by the support of fifty-six per cent of the non-military electorate was due largely to the influential bearing of the non-Anglo-Saxon vote in the constituency. An additional factor which greatly assisted the Liberal triumph in Essex North was the ambivalent pro-conscriptionist attitude espoused by the Liberal candidate. William C. Kennedy, a Liberal novice, favored conscription while he vociferously opposed Union Government. In a letter to Laurier he outlined his political views as a Liberal candidate:

I am opposed to any form of Government, Coalition, National or otherwise with Sir Robert Borden or any other Tory as leader. I believe the Liberal party under your leadership is essential to the progress and prosperity of the country.

I was opposed to any extension of Parliament believing the people should have the opportunity of being fully represented in Parliament.

¹⁷In 1911 Prescott had a total population of 26,968 of which 20,124 were French Canadians.

Fifth Census 1911.

Refer to Appendix 7 for statistical chart of electoral returns for the constituency of Prescott.

¹⁸Fifth Census 1911. The total population of Essex North was 38,006 in 1911 of which 14,078 was considered French Canadian, 19,482 British and 2,119 German.

As far as conscription is concerned my attitude is simply -- the law has been passed and you have said now that it is a law and it is our duty to see that it is properly carried out. The discussion of the merits and demerits of the issue cannot affect conditions as they are. . .

New questions may and undoubtedly will arise and I desire to be perfectly free to use my best judgment and with this in view enclose a copy of a resolution passed by the convention nomination of Mr. McGoig in Kent.¹⁹

The vague resolution²⁰ adopted by William Kennedy declared him in favor of independent political thinking on those measures which were related to the military support of Britain regardless of party lines. In response to Kennedy's expression of his political viewpoints, Laurier answered:

I approve every line therein written. On the question of conscription I have left a free hand for every member of the party individually. I see no reason to change my views now. It is a transient question which will be over in a few months at most.²¹

Sir Wilfrid Laurier repeatedly had informed his political associates across the nation during the election campaign that there was no reason for party disunity on the question of conscription. He had offered Liberals three positions to which they could adhere without breaking party ties: opposition to conscription and Union Government, opposition to Union Government while favoring conscription, and running as an independent Liberal.²² In this way the Liberal party fought a two-front election

¹⁹Laurier Papers, William C. Kennedy to Laurier, October 2, 1917. 197272.

²⁰For resolution adopted by Kennedy refer to Mr. McGoig's resolution on page

²¹Laurier Papers, Laurier to William C. Kennedy, October 6, 1917. 197275.

²²Ibid., Laurier to E.H. Macdonald, October 30, 1917. 197884.

campaign in 1917. In English Canada many Liberals while remaining loyal to Laurier supported conscription and thus attempted to allure both the anti- and pro-conscriptionist elements; in French Canada the Liberals ran as uncompromising opponents of the Military Service Act since the vast majority of French Canadians were opposed to conscription.

William C. Kennedy chose to run as an independent Liberal sympathetic to conscription. This manoeuvre along with his condemnation of "Bordenism" gave the Liberal candidate in Essex North enough of the English-speaking vote to assist him to victory. The French-Canadian and German-Canadian electorates voted overwhelmingly for Kennedy while the bulk of the Anglo-Saxon electorate supported Lt. Col. E.S. Wigle, the Unionist candidate.

The voting strength of the French- and German-Canadian electorates was an inestimable factor in the victory of the Liberal party in Essex North. Again the voting pattern revealed larger majorities for Liberalism in those areas where the non-Anglo-Saxon influence prevailed. In a predominantly English-speaking district like Wakerville Town²³ the Liberal candidate received only 354 votes as compared to the 902 votes for the Unionist candidate, whereas in a French-Canadian community like Sandwich Township West²⁴ William Kennedy effortlessly trounced Ernest Wigle, his Unionist rival, by a margin of 678 to 151 votes. In those polling divisions where the English-speaking population had a slight

²³The demographic composition of Wakerville Town was as follows: 2,385 British, 570 French Canadians, and 232 Germans.

²⁴In Sandwich Township West population figures disclosed that there were only 754 British inhabitants as compared with 2,306 French Canadians. For further statistical data refer to Appendix 8

popular majority the election returns although favorable to the Liberal cause were invariably close. The strength of the non-British²⁵ vote coupled with the Liberal candidate's non-hostile posture to conscription and the popular disenchantment with Borden's leadership gave victory to the Liberal party in Essex North.

2. The German-Canadian Constituencies

Waterloo:

Prior to the 1917 federal election the Conservative and Liberal parties had shared equally the political power in the constituency of Waterloo North, each party winning six of the twelve general elections since Confederation. The elections had never been one-sided contests until 1917 when the Liberal party won by a margin of 2,463 votes.²⁶ The decisive Liberal victory in Waterloo North demonstrates the support of the German-Canadian community for Laurier's anti-conscriptionist program.

During the election campaign the constituency of Waterloo North had indicated dramatically, to the astonishment of the nation, its utter detestation of Union Government. On 25 November, when Sir Robert Borden had attempted to deliver an election speech in Kitchener's largest auditorium, he was howled down and prevented from speaking by a monster

²⁵For the purpose of this study the term "non-British" refers to the French- and German-Canadian portion of the electorate.

²⁶In 1908 W.L. Mackenzie, a Liberal, had emerged victorious in the constituency with a majority of 263 votes; in 1911 William G. Weichel, a conservative captured the same seat with a majority of 315 votes.

anti-conscriptionist protest movement. It was reported that the protest had been organized by young men who were in the large part of German descent and of military age. Appeals by the mayor of Kitchener for "fair play" were greeted with mocking cries of "We want Laurier" and "Down with Conscription."²⁷

While the Prime Minister had refused to engage in a shouting bout with his hostile audience, Mr. William G. Welchel, the incumbent M.P. for Waterloo North and the Union Government candidate in the riding, managed to deliver a few words:

Whether you like it or not, North Waterloo is only one constituency, and Union Government is going to sweep the country.

Mr. Euler, my opponent, has been making some pretty reckless statements at Elmira. He said he would not have the blood of 100,000 men on his soul. Mr. Euler has never taken part in anything in the nature of a patriotic demonstration since the war started. If you have any red blood in your veins, you will stand by Union Government and see that our brave boys in the trenches get reinforcements.²⁸

The news of the anti-conscription demonstration in Kitchener was flashed across the nation. English Canada received the news with indignation, indicting the Kitchener protestors as "the enemies of free speech" and as subversive elements in the Canadian community. The Globe concluded that

Free speech in the election campaign is not only in danger -- it has ceased to exist in a large part of the country.²⁹

The Globe appealed to the residents of Ontario to refrain from emulating

²⁷Toronto Globe, November 26, 1917.

²⁸Ibid., November 26, 1917.

²⁹Ibid., November 26, 1917.

the ugly examples set forth by the province of Quebec where no Unionist candidate was allowed an honest hearing and by Kitchener where the Prime Minister was disgracefully silenced by anti-conscriptionists. The Ottawa Journal allied the Kitchener disturbance with the Laurierite program:

It tells us exactly what Sir Wilfrid Laurier stands for. Laurier is the head of the lose-the-war hope. The pro-Germans in Ontario are as hot for Laurier as are Bourassa and his allies in Quebec and the slackers and aliens everywhere.³⁰

Ultimately the Kitchener event may have provoked English-Canadian indignation to the point of accentuating the determination of English Canada to support Union Government.

The final election returns, in the seventy-five per cent German-Canadian constituency, showed that sixty-three per cent of the civilian electorate had lined up behind the Laurierite banner. All six of the polling districts which were thoroughly German dominated gave W. Euler sizeable majorities.³¹

3. The Predominantly Anglo-Saxon Constituencies

Kent:

The victory for Liberalism in the constituency of Kent was largely due to the personal strength of the candidacy of Archibald B. McGoig. Since 1903, when the constituency was first created, the Liberal party had come out on top in all three of the general elections. A.B. McGoig

³⁰Ottawa Journal, November 27, 1917.

³¹Refer to Appendix 9.

had masterminded two of the Liberal triumphs in 1908 and in 1911, winning by small majorities not exceeding eighty-two votes. In 1917, however, he defeated his Unionist adversary, J.W. Flewes, by a margin of 1,089 votes. The delicate political balance in the riding was disturbed drastically in 1917 by the vote of the non-British elements in Kent. The ethnic composition of the constituency showed that eleven per cent of the population was French-Canadian and five per cent was of German origin. The effect of the non-Anglo-Saxon vote was manifested strikingly in the polling division of Dover township where the French-Canadian population prevailed in numbers over the British-Canadian population.

While it is apparent from statistical data that the French- and German-Canadian voter overwhelmingly supported the Liberal candidate in Kent, the status quo in the voting behaviour of the English-speaking community was maintained. Mr. McCoig's acceptance of the Military Service Act along with his bitter denunciation of "Bordenism" kept the Liberal supporters within the party fold.

Archibald McCoig, having voted for the Military Service Act in the House of Commons, had been wooed by Union Government to join its ranks. The Unionist candidate in Kent, J.W. Flewes, on 28 November had offered to resign his candidature and thus give McCoig the seat by acclamation if the latter would have agreed to endorse Union Government.³²

³²London Free Press, November 28, 1917.

A.B. McCoig emphatically rejected the proposal, preferring to run as an independent Liberal.³³ McCoig supporters stood faithfully behind their candidate on condition that he "stand by all war measures of the Union Government, and particularly the Military Service Act, and render an independent support generally to Union Government in all other policies."³⁴ Refusing to be tagged Laurierite the Liberal convention in Kent passed a resolution committing A.B. McCoig to a course of independent action. The resolution read:

Be it further resolved that we empower Mr. McCoig to pursue a thorough independent course in Parliament no matter what party may be in power or who may be the leader of the Government, coalition or otherwise, supporting only such men and measures as he considers will best assist our Empire and her heroic defenders in this time of great need.³⁵

In his campaign for re-election, A.B. McCoig stressed his personal crusade against the food profiteers and grafters. He also pointed out his untiring efforts in Parliament to secure better income for the soldiers:

The national debt of this country does not need to be increased to give the boys better pay and pensions. It can be reduced if we conscript the surplus wealth of the wartime profiteers, and increase the pay of our soldiers.³⁶

³³Mr. A.B. McCoig's reply to Flewes' proposal was couched in the following terms: "The question is whether the suggestion of the Flewes supporters is in the best interests of the election or not. The resolution passed at my nomination gives me a free hand to support the best measures for winning the war. Am I to throw it to one side."

London Advertiser, November 29, 1917.

³⁴Toronto Globe, November 29, 1917.

³⁵Ibid., November 29, 1917.

³⁶London Advertiser, October 29, 1917.

On 31 October a women's organization meeting in Chatham, of which the majority present were soldiers' wives and dependents, endorsed McCoig as Kent's best parliamentary representative to wage the war against the food barons and grafters, and to secure better pensions for Canadian soldiers.³⁷

Although the Liberal candidate, A.B. McCoig, was criticized for "riding the conscription and the anti-conscription horses at the same time" by the exponents of Union Government,³⁸ his past record, his acceptance of conscription, and his condemnation of the Borden administration won for him the admiration and political support of the Liberal rank-and-file in Kent. The retention of party predilections in the constituency and the unanimous backing of Liberalism by French and German Canadians made for a solid victory for the independent candidacy of A.B. McCoig.

Bruce South:

The Conservative party had won two of the three federal elections in the riding of Bruce South since its creation in 1903. In 1908 and in 1911 the Conservative candidate had polled small popular majorities not exceeding 193 votes. In a bye-election during 1913 the Liberal candidate, Reuben E. Traux, overcame the past dominance of the Conservative party and emerged victorious with a majority of 115 votes. Traux repeated his victory in 1917, this time with a larger majority of 781 civilian votes. With a thirty-one per cent German population and

³⁷Ibid., October 31, 1917.

³⁸London Free Press, November 2, 1917.

with a conscriptionist Laurierite candidate contending for the seat, the voting pattern in the constituency of Bruce South paralleled that of Kent.

During the election campaign Reuben E. Traux, a Liberal who had voted along with the Conservative party in favor of the Military Service Act, was generally accorded the distinction of supporting both conscription and Laurier.³⁹ On 28 November the London Free Press reported that although A.B. McCoig had been successful in evading Laurier's approval of his candidature in Kent, Mr. Traux had been "less fortunate" and was "protesting to Ottawa to have the Laurierite tag removed."⁴⁰

The double identity of Traux did not hurt his bid for re-election but rather it assisted him to victory. Since Traux was a known sympathizer of conscription, Liberals were most reluctant to desert the party fold, and since his candidature had received the blessings of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the non-British voters invariably supported the Liberal Conscriptionist, siding with the lesser of two evils. Statistical evidence bolsters this latter contention. The Unionist candidate, Alexander McNab received the greatest electoral support in predominantly Anglo-Saxon district, whereas Traux obtained the bulk of the vote from heavily German populated areas. For instance, in Carrick where the German population numbered 3,264 as compared to the 705 Anglo-Saxon members of the community, Traux was given a 707 to 147 vote margin.⁴¹ It is probable that R.E. Traux without his conscriptionist reputation might have met defeat instead of a victory supported by fifty-six per cent of the popular civilian vote.

³⁹Toronto Globe, December 18, 1917.

⁴⁰London Free Press, November 28, 1917.

⁴¹Refer to Appendix 10 for further statistical data.

Middlesex West:

The constituency of Middlesex West had voted consistently Liberal since its creation in 1903. The success of the Liberal party in the riding in 1917 can be attributed primarily to the popularity and pro-conscription attitude of the Liberal candidate.

Duncan C. Ross, the son of a former Premier of Ontario, had held the seat for the riding of Middlesex West since November 1909 when the Liberal incumbent W.S. Calvert resigned. In the course of the conscription debate in the summer of 1917 Duncan C. Ross had voted in favor of the measure. During the election campaign Ross publicly stated that he supported the Military Service Act, but that he opposed Union Government because it "was not a true Union or National Government, such as in the best interests of the country, but that it was subservient of democratic institutions, a deliberate attempt on the part of big interests and the moneyed people to control the destiny of the country in their own interest for the next five years."⁴²

The Liberal candidate in Middlesex West, attuned to the mood of dissatisfaction as expressed by the London Advertiser, focussed his entire election campaign not on the issue of conscription, for he had no quarrel with Union Government on that count, but on the alleged spurious nature of Union Government and the mismanagement and corruption perpetrated by the Borden administration since 1911. The appeal by Duncan Ross for popular condemnation of "Bordenism" in Middlesex West struck a responsive chord. Fifty-five per cent of the civilian electorate voted for Ross and consequently he defeated his Unionist rival, E.A. Elliot, in twelve

⁴²London Advertiser, November 24, 1917.

of the fifteen polling divisions.

In Middlesex West where the issue of conscription had been killed by Liberal acceptance of it and where the non-British population was small, the voting pattern followed its traditional course. The Liberal party, as had been the political custom in Middlesex West, emerged victorious without any spectacular majority.

Renfrew South:

Early in the election campaign the Hon. George P. Graham, a prominent spokesman for Liberalism in Ontario, had tendered his resignation as the Liberal candidate for Renfrew South. His departure from the political arena, however, did not affect the strength of Liberalism in the constituency. The Toronto Globe predicted at the time that whoever was chosen to replace Graham would be easily elected in the forthcoming election.⁴³ Since the turn of the century Liberalism had thrived in Renfrew South, taking without any difficulty the three previous federal elections prior to 1917.⁴⁴

On 17 November a Liberal convention in Renfrew South chose Issac E. Pedlow, a staunch Laurierite, to lead the Liberal party in the riding. In the course of the election campaign, Sir Wilfrid visited Renfrew South and outlined in cogent terms his opposition to conscription and his abhorrence of Union Government. On the same platform with Laurier, Pedlow categorically announced his own personal anathema to conscription:

⁴³Toronto Globe, October 31, 1917.

⁴⁴In the federal elections of 1904, 1908, 1911 and 1917 the Liberal party won respectively with the following majorities: 188, 680, 619, 61 votes.

I am absolutely opposed to conscription in any shape or form. It is unthinkable that this young country should be saddled with such a law at this time, and it is an insult to Britain that she should be offered conscripts instead of volunteers.⁴⁵

In the same speech he branded his opponent Col. L.J. Martin as a lackey of Union Government who had been summoned by Borden to run in South Renfrew while leaving his men at the front "to swim or sink." In general, Pedlow's criticisms of Union Government were recited verbatim to his audience from the Laurier manifesto.

In the election, the Laurierite Liberal for Renfrew South received fifty-three per cent of the civilian popular vote. Since the non-British vote, amounting to approximately 24 per cent of the electorate,⁴⁶ was evenly distributed among the polling districts of the constituency, the racial split in the election returns is less obvious; however, close statistical analysis does confirm the contention that the size of the Liberal vote varied with the degree of concentration of the non-British vote in any particular polling sector.⁴⁷ The traditional hegemony of Liberalism in the constituency discouraged the severance of party ties and consequently this latter force bolstered by the French-Canadian vote made possible the victory of the anti-conscriptionist forces in Renfrew South.

⁴⁵Toronto Globe, December 4, 1917.

⁴⁶In Renfrew South 11.1% of the population was French-Canadian and 12.2% was of German descent.

⁴⁷Refer to Appendix 11 for statistical chart pertaining to election returns in Renfrew South.

4. The Military Vote A Cause For Defeat

A brief and general analysis of those constituencies in which the Liberal party received civilian popular majorities but as a result of the military vote went down to defeat will deepen the understanding of the extent and nature of Laurier's defeat and the triumph of Union Government in Ontario in 1917.

Three constituencies -- Nipissing, Essex South, and Perth South -- had rendered electoral victories to Liberal candidates prior to the inclusion of the military vote. In all three instances it would seem that the non-Anglo-Saxon vote played a conspicuous role in assisting the Liberal party to amass popular civilian majorities.

Nipissing exemplified the electoral response of the typical bi-cultural community in Ontario in the 1917 election. The constituency housed a total population of 74,130 of which 34,552 were classified as Anglo-Saxons, 26,277 as French Canadians and 2,920 as of German-Austrian descent. Having been established under the Act of 1902, the constituency had favored the Conservative party in three of the four general elections that had been staged prior to 1917. The conscription issue in 1917, however, brought an end to traditional politics in the area. A political confrontation along racial rather than party lines was witnessed in the riding.

Charles R. Harrison, the Laborite-Unionist, fared a poor second to Edmond A. Lapierre, the straight Liberal candidate in Nipissing prior to the balloting of the military vote. The former obtained 4,879

civilian votes while the latter received 6,218 civilian votes. The electoral success of the Laurierite candidate in the polling divisions of Nipissing varied according to the size of the French-Canadian population in any particular area of the riding. For instance, in Ferris Township with a French-Canadian population of 981 and an Anglo-Saxon population of 211 Edmond A. Lapierre polled 211 votes while his Unionist adversary obtained a paltry total of 66 votes. In contrast in a predominantly English-speaking district like North Bay where the French-Canadian and Anglo-Saxon populations totalled respectively 1,446 and 5,232 the Unionist candidate defeated his Laurierite opponent by a margin of 1,492 to 795 votes. This racial split based upon pro- and anti-conscriptionist attitudes characterized the electoral returns for Nipissing in 1917.⁴⁸

Once the military vote was brought into play in the constituency the Unionist candidate, Charles R. Harrison, who had trailed his political rival by 1339 votes prior to the inclusion of the military vote, gained victory with a majority of 444 votes.

Although in Essex South the racial cleavage during the election of 1917 was apparent, it assumed less of an influential role in light of the rigid party lines raised by the local Liberal and Conservative associations of the riding. In the period 1896-1911 the Liberal party had triumphed in five successive elections in Essex South. To uproot Liberalism in favor of non-partisan politics in the riding hence proved a difficult task.

Late in October 1917 an initial attempt was made by the Con-

⁴⁸Consult Appendix 12 for statistical chart pertaining to election returns of Nipissing.

servative Association of Essex South to bring about a coalition between itself and its Liberal counterpart. The Conservative organization of the riding had declared at the time that "dominated by the spirit of unity and a desire to cast politics to one side until after the war, we invite and welcome our friends on the Liberal side to a joint conference . . ." at which time a Unionist candidate would be chosen.⁴⁹ As a result of the parties' inability to unite on a common representative, negotiations on the question of selecting of a non-partisan candidate for Essex South eventually proved a dismal failure.

The confusion and discord surrounding the selection of a non-partisan candidate for the riding also took hold of the Liberal nominating convention held in Windsor on 9 November to designate a party standard bearer. Although George P. Graham had received the majority of the votes at the Essex Liberal convention, his legitimacy as Liberal representative for the riding was disputed on the grounds that more votes had been cast than there had been accredited delegates present.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, six days later George Graham's candidacy was confirmed by a second Liberal convention. Robert Atkin, a straight Laurier Liberal, who ran a very close second to Graham, however, refused to accept the Liberal Association's approval of Graham's Liberal candidacy. Unlike George P. Graham, a Liberal who had voted along with the Borden Government on the conscription legislation and who favored the implementation of compulsory military service, Robert Atkin was a staunch Laurierite who opposed conscription and strictly adhered to Laurier's manifesto.

⁴⁹Toronto Globe, October 25, 1917.

⁵⁰Ibid., November 10, 1917.

Without any explanation George Graham withdrew his candidature on 19 November. In this way an internecine Liberal party squabble was averted in Essex South and thus the election campaign saw a Laurier Liberal and a Conservative Unionist vie for power. The chaos created by the selection of a Liberal candidate in the riding -- at first a conscriptionist Liberal was chosen and then a straight Laurier Liberal was permitted to replace the former in the wake of his resignation -- would suggest that many Essex Liberals were keenly conscious of party lines regardless of the conscription issue.

While party loyalties prevented the forces of coalition from uniting in Essex North, the bi-racial character of the riding abetted partisan politics. The 1911 census revealed that while English-speaking Canadians comprised 64 per cent of the riding's population, French-Canadians and German-Austrian elements of the community formed respectively 22 per cent and 10 per cent of Essex South's demographic map. The election returns clearly established French-Canadian preference for Liberalism in the constituency. In three of the predominantly French-Canadian populated polling divisions of Essex South the total civilian vote overwhelmingly favored Liberalism: while the Liberal candidate received 771 votes, his opponent obtained only 155 votes. This wide margin of victory for Liberalism in the three French-Canadian areas of the riding had a crucial bearing on the election results when one considers that the Liberal victory on the basis of the civilian vote was bolstered only by a majority of 119 votes.⁵¹

⁵¹For statistical evidence refer to Appendix 13.

Since the German-Austrian population of the constituency was scattered widely throughout Essex South it is impossible to prove statistically how it voted in the riding; however, one can only speculate that the German-Austrian population in Essex South, conforming to the voting pattern established by other German-Austrian communities in the province, overwhelmingly supported Liberalism in the election.

In Perth South, a constituency with a German population embracing twenty per cent of the community, the Laurierite candidate, William Forrester who had polled initially 2700 civilian votes as compared to the Unionist total of 2,427 eventually went down to defeat when the military vote was brought into play. Electoral returns again would indicate that the German population heavily favored Liberalism and consequently made victory for Liberalism possible on the basis of the civilian vote.

Although it is difficult to arrive at any categorical conclusion regarding the German vote in Perth South as a result of the even distribution of the German population in the riding; it is possible, however, to make a reasonably fair assessment of the role played by the latter in the election. For instance, in the district of Logan Township with a German population of 1178, comprising approximately thirty per cent of the total German population of the riding, and with an English-speaking population of 1,598, the Laurier Liberal defeated his Unionist opponent by a wide margin of 518 to 206 votes. One can fully appreciate the influential role of the German vote in a riding like Perth South when the margin of victory for Liberalism as manifested in Logan Township, amounting to 312 votes, is contrasted with the total civilian vote for the entire riding which gave Liberalism victory by a count of 2700 to 2427 votes,

a slight margin of 273 votes in favor of the Grit party.

In the predominantly English-speaking polling division of the constituency, although in some cases the civilian vote favored the Laurierite, the voting gap was never as large as evidenced in Logan Township. This voting pattern would tend to suggest that not only did the German population strongly favor Liberalism but that a sizeable portion of English-speaking Canadians voted along party lines.

The election returns for Tavistock Village in Perth South substantially reinforces the hypothesis that the German population of that constituency overwhelming sided with Laurier in the 1917 election. Tavistock Village housed a German population of 424 and an English-speaking population of 136. Consequently the Laurierite Liberal obtained 104 civilian votes, whereas the Unionist candidate polled a mere 34 votes.

In a letter to Sir Robert Borden, in the aftermath of the election, the Unionist candidate for Perth South attempted to explain his initial electoral reversal:

I always thought I would get a share of the German vote. I am quite confident that the soldiers vote will elect me. I am only 273 behind but if not elected the cause for which we fight is still mine.

Life in a German community like this is now almost intolerable. It would not be quite so bad if it were not for the few devilish English speaking creatures that are willing to betray everything a decent man desires for the purpose of catering to the Boshes. I wish I could get the Government to see the Germans as I see them, living among them. They are not French Canadians -- much worse. The insult to the Premier was approved and gloried in by 75% of the breed. They planned a similar affair here for me when I held a meeting, and while noisy enough, they could not get

enough courage to carry out their plans. Every reference to the soldiers or British success in the war was greeted by jeers by the few and smiled at by the many.⁵²

The military vote which favored the Unionist candidate by a score of 343 to 13 votes turned defeat into victory for Union Government in Perth South by a slim majority of 57 votes. In retrospect, the initial Liberal victory in the riding of Perth South in 1917 can be attributed in great measure to the widespread support rendered to Liberalism by the German ethnic vote in that community.⁵³ Taking into account that the initial Liberal victory in Perth South represented the voice of 52 per cent of the civilian electorate and that approximately 20 per cent of that electorate was of German ethnic background which in the 1917 federal election sided overwhelmingly with Liberalism, one can speculate that less than forty per cent of the English-speaking electorate of Perth South opposed conscription and Union Government in 1917.⁵⁴

⁵²Borden Papers, Dr. Steele to Robert Borden, December 24, 1917. 41023.

⁵³In Perth North with similar ethnic conditions as in Perth South the Laurierite candidate attracted forty-six per cent of the civilian vote. Again the size of the vote in the polling divisions of the riding varied according to the German ethnic presence in any particular voting district. For statistical representation of this contention refer to Appendix 13a.

⁵⁴A cursory glance at those Ontario constituencies in which the Liberal party was defeated but nonetheless obtained more than forty per cent of the popular civilian vote will enhance the contention that the French-Canadian and German-Austrian electorate of the province voted overwhelmingly for Laurier and that the vast majority of English-speaking Canadians staunchly supported conscription and Union Government. The Liberal party managed to attract at least forty per cent of the civilian vote in eighteen of eighty-two Ontario ridings in 1917. In eight of the former 18 constituencies the combined French- and German-Canadian populations represented at least twenty per cent of the demographic map of the communities, in four

The federal election of 1917 was virtually a referendum on the question of conscription. Although the severely mutilated English-speaking wing of the Liberal party had endeavored to play down the issue of conscription by focussing on the political ineptness of the previous Borden administration and by castigating Union Government as a façade for Conservatism, it failed lamentably to convince English Canadians in Ontario to the contrary. The victory for Union Government was hailed as victory for conscription and patriotism, while the demise of the Liberal party was interpreted as a rejection of partisan politics and national recreancy:

Patriotism, union, conscription and Britishism have triumphed; racialism, partisanship, bigotry, and slander have been trampled in their own mire.⁵⁵

The Flag will not come down. Canada's Allies will not be betrayed. The Canadian soldiers at the front will not be deserted. Quebec shall not rule Canada.⁵⁶

Canada has determined her course. Parliament cannot misconstrue Monday's mandate. It is a national declaration commanding the consecration of the entire resources of the Dominion to the supreme task of war-winning.⁵⁷

constituencies between ten and nineteen per cent and in six constituencies between five and nine per cent. Another "vote-catcher" device used to the advantage of Liberalism in these latter 18 ridings is to be found in the labelling of the Liberal candidates. A number of camouflaging labels were adopted by Liberals in an effort to remain loyal to the party and at the same time disassociate their candidacy from Laurier's anti-conscription stance. In only four of the eighteen ridings in question the Liberal candidates openly indicated their opposition to conscription by designating themselves as straight Laurier Liberals. For a statistical chart of the latter eighteen constituencies refer to Appendix 14, 15 and 16.

⁵⁵Ottawa Journal, December 18, 1917.

⁵⁶London Free Press, December 18, 1917.

⁵⁷Toronto Globe, December 19, 1917.

The stigma of anti-conscription attached to Laurierite Liberals in Ontario produced a wave of ideological and racial hostility to Liberalism. Only 33.7 per cent of the popular vote sided with Sir Wilfrid Laurier in Ontario. A large slice of the popular support of Liberalism represented French and German-Canadian opinion. Since the latter elements comprised sixteen per cent of the Ontario demographic map, and since the electoral behaviour of these two non-British segments of the Ontario community has been shown to have been overwhelmingly in favor of Liberalism in 1917, it would not be presumptuous to speculate that less than twenty per cent of the English-speaking electorate in Ontario supported the Liberal party.

In the election of 1917 English-Canadian consensus in Ontario heightened its previous moral and physical commitment to the war. To have done otherwise would have necessitated a disturbing re-assessment of the validity and righteousness of their involvement in the global conflict. It would have required a reappraisal of their war aims. For English Canadians there was no questioning, for they felt both justified and privileged to have a conspicuous role in the "crusade for freedom."

Shall Quebec Haul Down This Flag?

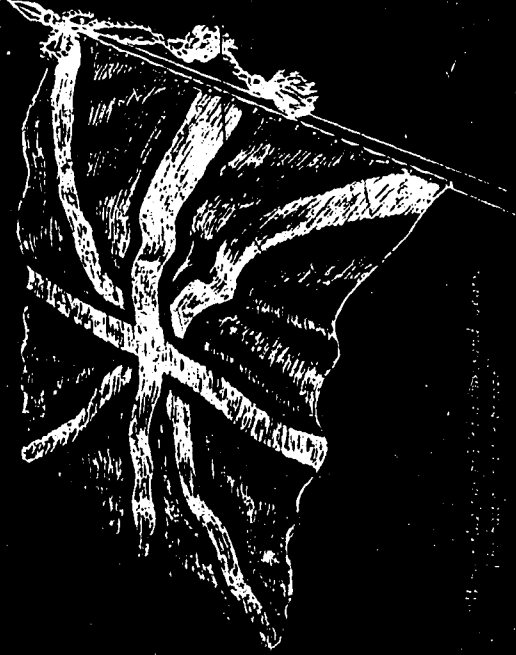
Quebec challenges the Old Flag. Hon. Mr. Lormier says: "We have to be first across the sea." Henri Bourassa demands that we desert the flag, even as he bids brutal Germany at bay.

SHALL THE FLAG COME DOWN?

From the rain-slicked shores of Vancouver Island to the granite coasts of Nova Scotia there comes a rising cry, stout of a great host of loyal British hearts: "NEVER!"

The eight English-speaking Provinces take up the challenge of Quebec. Eight provincial premiers forget their politics and unite to give an answer once and for all that Canada shall remain a daughter in her mother's house. The English-speaking church proclaims as with a common voice the ringing note of "NO SURRENDER!" Employers and employees, the farmer and the artisan, stand firmly and determinedly together. The women of British Canada trail in the thunderous response:

"THE FLAG SHALL NOT COME DOWN!"



THE LANCET



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CHAPTER IV

WESTERN CANADA

Western Canada played a key role in the victory of Union Government. The massive anti-conscription vote of Quebec, and the split vote of the Maritimes had a neutralizing effect on the election returns of Eastern Canada. Without the Western vote the election results placed Union Government in front with a small margin of one hundred to eighty seats. If Western Canada had followed the electoral pattern of the two previous elections, giving each party equal parliamentary representation, the electoral decision in favor of Union Government would have been considerably smaller. Fortunately for Union Government the traditional pattern of Western electoral behaviour, favoring Liberalism, was shattered.¹ In 1917 with its increased parliamentary representation the West rejected Laurier. While Union Government emerged victorious in fifty-five constituencies, the Liberal party proved successful in only two Western ridings.

¹During the Laurier era, 1896-1911, the Liberal party had succeeded in obtaining a parliamentary majority in the four Western provinces in the 1896, 1900 and 1904 general elections. In the 1908 and 1911 federal elections it came out even with the Conservative party. op. cit. Beck.

The news that the Liberal party had suffered an absolute electoral defeat in the West came as a shock to Laurier. With failing health he had campaigned in Western Canada to no avail. In the aftermath of the election Sir Wilfrid, along with his loyal supporters, attributed his defeat in Western Canada to Borden's successful gagging of the popular will:

My trips westward convinced me that the masses of the people were with us, but effective means were taken to stifle their voice and have no real but a mechanical majority.²

Undoubtedly the disfranchisement of the enemy alien community in Western Canada assisted the Unionist cause; however, it would be grossly inaccurate to assume, as Laurier did, that the disfranchised alien vote represented the most important factor in the victory of Union Government.

The 1916 census of the Prairie provinces had shown that seventy-one percent of the combined population of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta was either Canadian or British born, sixteen per cent was European born, and approximately eleven per cent was American.³ From these figures it becomes clear that even if one assumes that the sixteen percent European-born population of the Prairie provinces in 1916 was entirely of German-Austrian descent and that this total population was disfranchised in 1917 the alien vote would still represent a minority voice in the election. Taking into account 71.4 per cent of the Prairie electorate voted Unionist and that at an exaggerated best sixteen per cent of the electorate had been disfranchised, it seems inconceivable, even if the total eligible alien population had been permitted to vote in 1917, that Laurier would have

²Laurier Papers, Laurier to George P. Graham, December 20, 1917. 198983.

³Canadian Dominion Bureau of Statistics, The Canada Year Book 1918. 110.

obtained a popular majority in the West.⁴ The eighty-two per cent Anglo-Saxon population stood solidly behind Union Government. In British Columbia the size of the German-Austrian community played an insignificant role in the election.⁵

1. Union Government And Western Reaction

The idea of a general election held during the war had found little support in Western Canada. It had been hoped that a coalition of the two federal parties would have eliminated the need for an election. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's staunch opposition to conscription, however, placed an almost insurmountable stumbling block in the path of coalition. In the aftermath of Laurier's official rejection of Borden's coalition proposal the tide of Western opinion began to turn against Liberalism as articulated by Laurier.

The Manitoba Free Press, a foremost exponent of Western Liberalism, led the insurrection. John W. Dafoe, editor of the Free Press, had lost faith in the leadership of Laurier.⁶ On the question of the Franchise Act the Free Press justified the Conservative legislation, disfranchising the enemy alien, however, it expressed unreserved preference for the total enfranchisement of the woman population, believing women to

⁴It should be pointed out that these figures do not take into account what portion of the 198,000 aliens in question were Canadian citizens. Since citizenship rendered one eligibility to vote and since in all probability a large portion of the latter total of aliens were not Canadian citizens, it would not be presumptuous to conclude that the number of aliens who were legally disfranchised in 1917 numbered much less than 198,000 or 15% of the Prairie population.

⁵The German-Austrian population of British Columbia totalled 18,955 in 1911, representing about 4.5 per cent of the province's population. op.cit. Fifth Census 1911.

⁶Ramsay Cook, "Dafoe, Laurier and the Formation of Union Government." Canadian Historical Review. September 1961.

be devoted whole-heartedly to the war.⁷ Western opinion was generally in favor of debarring the alien from casting his vote in a war-time election. With some regret it was argued that

It is unfair to them [alien] to expect them to use their franchise directly against the land of their fathers, and in very many instances against their own flesh and blood in the firing front of Europe. . .⁸

The formation of Union Government evoked widespread popular commendation in Western Canada. In the Prairie provinces Union Government received particular acclaim because it contained the most progressive and Liberal-minded representatives of Western Canada and because it gave increased political recognition to the West. The Western Liberal representatives in the Union cabinet included J.A. Crerar, President of the United Grain Growers' Grain Company, Hon. A.L. Sifton, the Premier of Alberta and Hon. J.A. Calder, Minister of Railways in the Saskatchewan Government.⁹ In British Columbia there was some disappointment expressed as to the formation of Union Government because it failed to grant cabinet representation to the Liberal party in that province.¹⁰

2. The Edmonton Bulletin, Laurier And The Campaign

The sole spokesman for Liberalism in Western Canada, the Edmonton Bulletin, was very critical of Union Government, declaring it to be

⁷Manitoba Free Press, September 13, 1917.

⁸Calgary Herald, September 7, 1917.

⁹Manitoba Free Press, October 15, 1917; also, Calgary Herald, October 13, 1917.

¹⁰Vancouver Sun, October 13, 1917.

the same old Borden Government with a few Liberal "goats":

The Borden Government is still in existence . . . only enough Liberals have been included to attach some of the odium of that record to the Liberal party, to hamper future opposition and criticism of the Government and to give the line-up a less reprehensible appearance when it comes before the electors. There is nothing in the reorganization to redeem the Government from the incompetence that has characterized it in the past.¹¹

During the election campaign in Western Canada the Laurierites followed the identical lines of promoting Liberalism as their Eastern counterparts, devoting most of their energies to discrediting Union Government and to allying it with big business. It was openly suggested that the motivating force behind coalition government was the capitalist class who feared the justice of Laurier.¹² The voter was told that only if Laurier were re-elected to the premiership would the influence of the plutocracy be brought to an end:

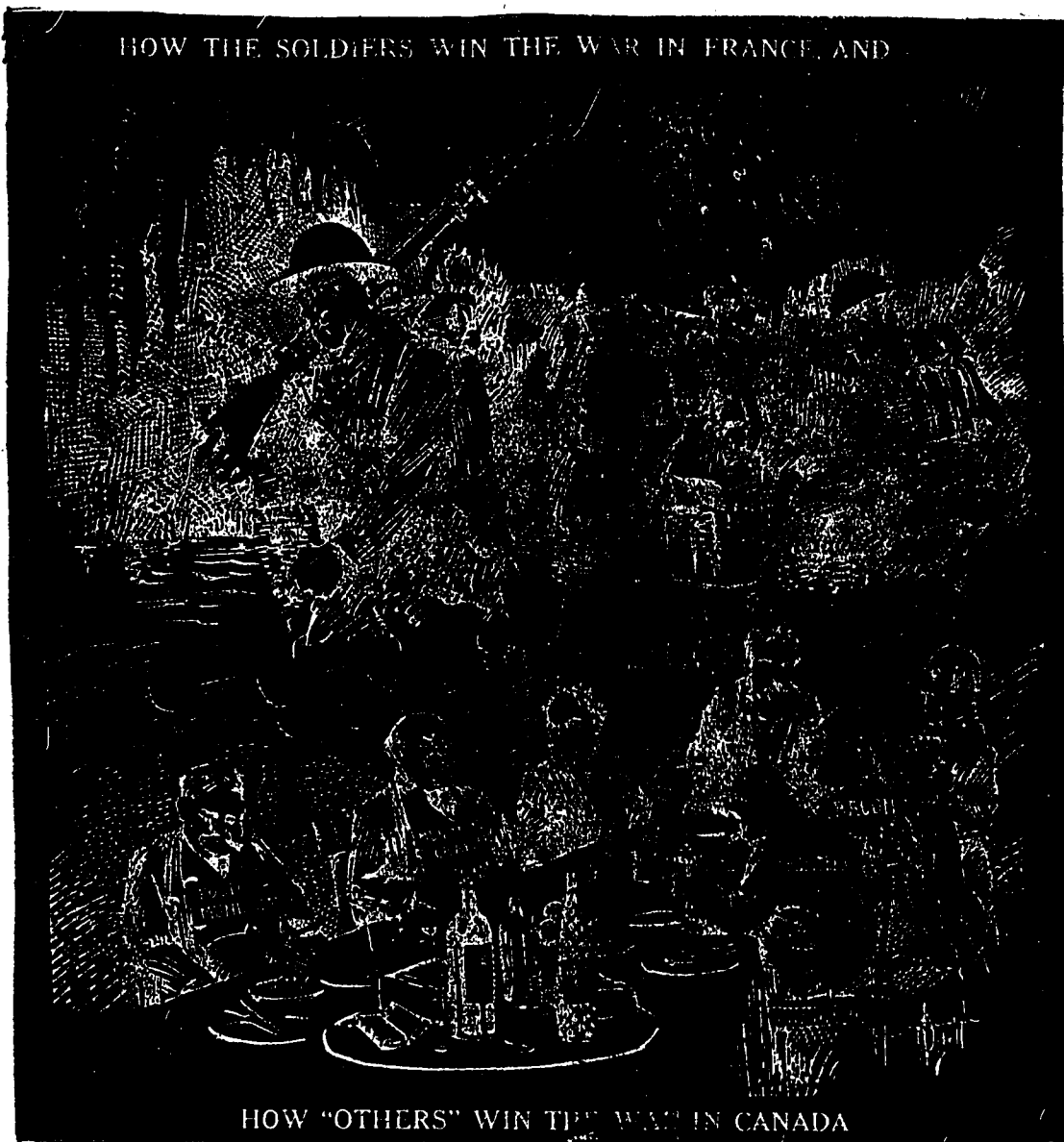
The chief reason why Sir Wilfrid Laurier should be returned to power is the combination that has been formed to keep him out of power. It is a combination strikingly similar in character to that which beat reciprocity in 1911. The price of that "victory" the public have been paying ever since. If the "victory" can be repeated the collection of the spoils will continue. The return of Laurier is the one hope at this time the Canadian people have of escaping from the clutches of the monied autocracy.¹³

No effort was spared by the Bulletin to tarnish the image of Union Government. The Borden administration was condemned for the C.N.R.

¹¹Edmonton Bulletin, October 16, 1917.

¹²Ibid., October 30, 1917.

¹³Ibid., November 17, 1917.



Edmonton Bulletin, December 15, 1917.

HOW THE SOLDIERS WIN THE WAR IN FRANCE, AND—



HOW "OTHERS" WIN THE WAR IN CANADA

Edmonton Bulletin, December 15, 1917.

deal, describing it as a public gift to Mackenzie and Mann.¹⁴ As a result of the Franchise Act, Union Government was equated with the evils of Prussianism:

The autocracy of Germany that has plunged the world in misery and stained the soil of Europe with the blood of millions finds imitation in the attempt to subject the people of Canada to a system of like irresponsible government. How far our Canadian government has already gone in imitation of its Prussian prototype is shown by the fact that it now dares to break the pledge of the King and to disfranchise citizens to whom every right of citizenship had been accorded in his name. The idea behind the Prussian autocracy is the same idea as that upon which Canada's collusion government is based, the idea that the people cannot be trusted to do what is right, but must be either dragooned or deceived into taking the course that their rulers choose to say is best for them and for the nation.¹⁵

As to the conscription issue Western Laurierites argued that the election did not revolve around this question because Laurier had no intention of repealing the Military Service Act without the consent of the people. The Bulletin angrily denounced the Unionist newspapers that insisted that a Laurier victory was tantamount to the abrogation of conscription:

Sir Wilfrid has said in a published manifesto that there will be conscription under Laurier if the people want it. The issue is not conscription or no conscription, but whether the people shall rule or whether they should be ruled.¹⁶

The Hon. Frank Oliver, editor of the Bulletin and candidate for Edmonton West, and Hon. C.W. Cross, attorney general of Alberta, were the foremost spokesmen for Liberalism in Alberta. Their campaign speeches,

¹⁴Ibid., October 17, 1917; November 5, 1917; November 13, 1917.

¹⁵Ibid., November 13, 1917.

¹⁶Ibid., November 28, 1917.

reflecting closely the arguments of the Laurier manifesto, emphasized the following points: the unprecedented prosperity that Canada experienced during the Laurier era, the masquerading image of Union Government, the control of Union Government by the privileged and financial interests, the imposition of high tariff rates on farm machinery by Union Government, the undemocratic nature of the War-Times Elections Act, the unnecessary resortment to conscription by Sir Robert Borden, and the importance of and need for greater food production.

During the month of November Sir Wilfrid Laurier received several letters from Western Liberals requesting that he come out West to inspire the Canadian voter in the interest of Liberalism. One of the letters urging Laurier to visit Western Canada before the election read:

I believe that the public mind is prepared for your visit and it will be disappointed if you do not come. There is a very general feeling that the public have only had one side of the question, and I believe that if it received your casual frank discussion the need and real desire of co-operation between all sections of Canada it would go a long way to allaying the feelings of distrust and antagonism which Sifton and others have stirred. . . .¹⁷

After weighing the invitation, Laurier decided to make a campaign tour of Western Canada in the hope of attracting the electoral support of that region. In the course of his Western campaign Sir Wilfrid Addressed enthusiastic audiences in Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary and Vancouver. In all his speeches the Liberal chieftain warned Canadians not to be deceived by the façade of Union Government -- ". . . don't believe that any Union Government merely with a little new blood in it can entirely alter the old one,

¹⁷Laurier Papers, J. Donovan (Winnipeg) to Laurier, November 16, 1917.

"WHO IS YOUR LEADER?"

"Who is your leader?" asks Sir Thomas White to his electors assembled at Brockville on the evening of November 7th. "Under which flag, Borden or Laurier?"

This is a momentous question, and we repeat to the electors of Canada, "Who is your leader?"

"LAURIER"	or	"BORDEN"
The people	or	The Big Interests.
Do you favor		
The soldier	or	The profiteer.
The worker	or	The trusts.
The consumer	or	The food manipulators.
The tax payer	or	The pork barons.
Shall we have		
The people consulted	or	The people ignored.
Cheaper food	or	Higher tariff.
Honesty	or	Grafting.
Economy	or	Extravagance.
Direct purchasing	or	Middlemen's profits.
A United Canada	or	A divided Canada.
A people's Government	or	A millionaires' Govern- ment.
A Government utilizing its national workshops or for the state	or	A Government leaving its National workshops to par- tisan supporters for private gain.
A National Government	or	A "Union Government."
Shall we be under the flag of		
Liberty	or	Bondage.
Democracy	or	Autocracy.
Free people	or	Organized privilege.

Sir Thomas White has registered his vote in the "Borden" column. Where will yours be found?

Edmonton Bulletin, December 14, 1917.

"WHO IS YOUR LEADER?"

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The consumer	or	The food manipulators.
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Cheaper food	or	Higher tariff.
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Economy	or	Extravagance.
Direct purchasing	or	Middlemen's profits.
A United Canada	or	A divided Canada.
A people's Government	or	A millionaires' Government.
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Democracy	or	Autocracy.
Free people	or	Organized privilege.

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or change the spots of the leopard."¹⁸ He reminded Westerners of the past: the prosperity and progress that had prevailed during his fifteen years in office, and his defeat in 1911 because he dared to espouse reciprocity with the United States. Laurier repeatedly asserted his devotion to the war and took odds with the Unionist attempt to monopolize the title of "win-the-war" party. In his speeches Sir Wilfrid attributed French-Canadian apathy to recruiting to the Conservative-Nationalist alliance of 1911 and strongly refuted the Unionist insinuation that Henri Bourassa and the Nationalists were in direct alliance with Liberalism. He also argued that he opposed conscription on the basis that he preferred persuasion over compulsion. Voluntaryism had not failed and he was confident that he would be able to revive recruiting in Quebec:

I know my fellow-countrymen, and I can always appeal to their hearts and sentiments and honor. Their honor was never appealed to, and I say this, that if the province of Quebec has not enlisted men, it can enlist and it will enlist them if it is properly appealed to.¹⁹

Sir Wilfrid Laurier declared in his Winnipeg address that he was opposed to the Government's arbitrary enforcement of conscription because he knew that organized labor and other large sectors of the population were opposed to compulsory recruiting. For Laurier the only democratic method of determining a nation's will in matters of grave importance was to consult the people through the means of a referendum. In closing his first election address in Western Canada, Laurier somberly predicted a more pronounced state of disharmony in the nation if Union Government should

¹⁸ Manitoba Free Press, December 11, 1917. Address delivered by Laurier in Winnipeg at the time as reported by the Free Press.

¹⁹ Ibid., December 11, 1917.

be elected to power:

If they win the election . . . I know one thing, that the rent in the garment will be worse than it was, the division in the nation will be deeper than it was, and the work of making this a united country will receive a set back.²⁰

In the last two weeks of the election campaign the Bulletin, endeavoring to rally electoral support behind the Liberal banner, persistently indicted Union Government for attempting to steal the election by nefarious methods and exaggerated the popularity of Liberalism. The warm reception extended to Laurier by Western Canada during his election tour raised the hopes of Laurierites who equated the gathering of large friendly crowds to hear Laurier with a favorable vote for Liberalism:

The splendid receptions accorded to Sir Wilfrid Laurier in Winnipeg and Regina show that the people of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, like the people of Alberta, have not been deluded by the win-the-war pretension, made in behalf of the reorganized Borden government. If the people in the cities turn out in crowds to cheer the champion of democracy, it is a safe surmise that the farmers -- who are less liable to the chloroforming influence of collusionist newspapers -- are not deceived as to the purpose of those behind the reorganization, and no more enamored of the methods by which it is being sought to suppress public opinion and establish by the profiteers of another term. Sir Wilfrid's progress through the West is in the nature of a triumphal procession.²¹

The apogee of Laurierite optimism was reached a few days prior to election day when the Bulletin forecasted that the Liberal party would emerge victorious on 17 December with a thirty-one seat majority in parlia-

²⁰Ibid., December 11, 1917.

²¹Edmonton Bulletin, December 13, 1917.

ment. The Laurierite newspaper also ventured to predict that Laurier would take at least twenty-four of the fifty-six Western seats. The official election returns left the Bulletin and Western Laurierites dumbfounded and embittered. The decisive victory by Union Government was lamented as the triumph of big business:

Big business has succeeded in its conspiracy to turn the war conditions to account, and to secure control of the governing power of the country for another parliamentary term. Congratulations are accordingly due to the Allison and Flavell who are thereby freed from the necessity of restoring the plunder they have looted from the war chest and extorted from the necessities and misfortunes of their countrymen; what they have they hold. Likewise to the great manufacturing interests, and the pirates of high finance who have re-established a Government indebted to them for its existence and pledged to preserve their grip on the productive industry of the nation. The people have been beaten, and the victors will collect the spoils.²²

The Bulletin went on to say that the election had been a farce:

It was not a general election that was held yesterday, but only a poll of those whom the Ministry were pleased to allow the privileges of exercising the franchise.²³

3. A Vote For Laurier, A Vote For French Canada And National Degradation

The Unionist election campaign in Western Canada proved an enormous success because it was bolstered by both the prominent secessionist Liberals -- Crerar, Calder and Sifton -- and by the powerful organizations of the Prairie farmer.²⁴ It is improbable that Union Government

²²Ibid., December 18, 1917.

²³Ibid., December 18, 1917.

²⁴The role of the Western farm movements as related to the promotion of war and Union Government shall be discussed in Chapter VI.

would have received the overwhelming endorsement of Western Canada without the support of the above-mentioned Liberals. Their espousal of Union Government helped to make conscription a valid and national issue, and their rejection of Laurier convinced the electorate that the Laurierite program had been motivated by party politics and French Canada's desire to thwart Canadian involvement in the war. As in Ontario the election of 1917 was interpreted by the Western press as simply a plebiscite on the question of conscription.

Although the Unionist domestic program was lauded as an inspiring and progressive platform, especially in regards to the elimination of patronage and profiteering, minimal publicity was accorded this aspect of Union Government, most emphasis being reserved for the conscription issue. The Hon. James A. Calder, the influential secessionist Liberal from Saskatchewan, in his first election address, outlined the essential ideological difference between himself and Laurier, setting the tone of the Unionist election campaign in Western Canada:

I admire Sir Wilfrid Laurier for all he has stood for. I admire his ability and his record, but when it comes down to the main issue in this election, he and I must part company. We differ on a great principle, and we have the right to part company when that occasion arises. Sir Wilfrid Laurier stands today where he first stood in parliament when this first question came up. He is opposed to conscription and in favor of submitting this question to a referendum of the people. I believe we have reached the stage where this being a war of defence, it is the duty of the state to see that our men come forward without resorting to a referendum.²⁵

²⁵Manitoba Free Press, October 23, 1917.

In all four Western provinces the issue of compulsory military service was placed in the lime-light. In British Columbia, the Victoria Times, a vigorous exponent of Liberalism, regrettably parted ways with Sir Wilfrid on the question of conscription, interpreting the Liberal chieftain's referendum policy as a delaying tactic. It professed that "the mere election of Sir Wilfrid would imply the defeat of compulsory military service."²⁶ The Times lashed out against the Victoria Liberal association which had decided in favor of a party contest while adopting a resolution subscribing to conscription. The Liberal association was criticized for its illogical stance:

The meeting last night adopted a resolution favoring compulsory military service as part of a national war policy and at the same time endorsed Sir Wilfrid Laurier . . . they cannot do both; one policy is the negation of the other.²⁷

The Vancouver Sun, a Liberal newspaper which remained sympathetic to Laurier while unenthusiastically endorsing Union Government and conscription, justified its dissension from the Laurierite program in the following terms:

Canada is suffering from too much politics. It is time politicians realized that the effort of the country should be consolidated on the life-and-death struggle in which it is engaged, instead of dispersed on a number of small party issues.²⁸

In Alberta the Calgary Herald, representing Liberal conscriptionist thought, warned Westerners not to be misled by Laurier's declaration that since conscription was the law of the land it was not an issue

²⁶Victoria Times, November 5, 1917.

²⁷Ibid., November 8, 1917.

²⁸Vancouver Sun, October 19, 1917.

in the election:

In spite of the argument of old guard Liberals to the contrary. The Herald believes conscription is the important issue of the election. It is just as much the issue today as it was before Sir Wilfrid urged the people to obey the Military Service Act. The fact that he urges obedience to the law does not mean that he either believes in or is friendly to the law. Should he be returned to power by accident, one of his first acts would be to make the Military Service Act of no effect.

To return Sir Wilfrid to power would mean the end of Canada's service in the war from a fighting standpoint. Quebec would then control and Quebec has said that all Canada should be expected to do is supply food and munitions for the other fellows.

Certainly conscription is the big issue in the election -- just as big today as ever before; bigger, in fact, because the enemies of conscription are now trying to pose as its friends, and it behoves the real friends of Military Service to keep their minds clear on the subject.²⁹

The issue in Saskatchewan³⁰ and in Manitoba did not vary from the other Western provinces. The Manitoba Free Press declared that the election was a plebiscite on the question of compulsory military service:

This election is a referendum. The issue is:

Shall we put the whole force of this country behind the war in men, munitions and men; Or shall we put further contributions to the war on the Prussian basis: talk, accompanied by a furious scramble for office?

There are individuals who get purple in the face when told that this is the choice; they insist that

²⁹Calgary Herald, October 22, 1917.

³⁰The National Archives in Ottawa lack any records of Saskatchewan newspapers for the year 1917, preventing the researcher from examining carefully the public opinion of that province during the election period of 1917. However, all available sources such as the Canadian Annual Review, daily newspapers of the era, and elections returns for the province in 1917 clearly indicate that Saskatchewan responded in much the same fashion as did the other Western provinces.

there are other important issues which will determine the casting of their votes.

An elector in this frame of mind can give any reason he chooses to his neighbor and his conscience for the ballot he casts; but when it is cast it will be for:

Going on with the war, or getting out of the war; Remembering our troops in the field or forgetting them; Keeping faith with the living, or deserting the living and dishonoring our dead.³¹

Thus in Western Canada the electorate was given one issue to decide upon in the election of 1917 -- whether to support or reject conscription. The voter was unable to escape this political reality because the preponderant majority of Western newspapers offered a uniform interpretation of the election issues.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier's manifesto was received in Unionist circles as a masterful and contemptible attempt to confuse the electorate and to satisfy as many segments of the Canadian population as possible. It was emphatically pointed out that the most important revelation of the manifesto was Laurier's continued opposition to conscription. The remaining features of the manifesto were labelled as "surplusage" and "mere camouflage". It was argued that the Laurierite program exemplified Sir Wilfrid's lust for power:

The whole manifesto, with its crafty and insincere appeal to every appetite and lurking discontent in the country and its audacious promise of the impossible, reveals the passionate lust for office and the determination to attain it at all cost with which those, who are behind Sir Wilfrid Laurier in the fight for power, are consumed.³²

³¹Manitoba Free Press, November 23, 1917.

³²Ibid., November 5, 1917.

CHEERING UP FRITZ'S DROOPING SPIRITS



Calgary Herald, December 12, 1917.



Calgary Herald, December 12, 1917.

In other regions of Western Canada the manifesto was looked upon as "nothing new" and as a pledge to Quebec,³³ or as a declaration in favor of a referendum which inevitably meant "that Canada would cease to send adequate reinforcements for soldiers overseas. . . ."³⁴

As the election campaign progressed in Western Canada the Unionist forces increasingly emphasized the racial split in the country. Headlines purporting the death of free speech in Quebec and the news that French Canadians were generously being awarded exemptions from military service by the local tribunals incensed a large segment of Western opinion. The Free Press voiced the indignation of the West by identifying French Canada as "Our Bosheviki":

There is no longer any reason why the whole truth should not be spoken about Quebec.

The people of that Province have been ranked quitters throughout the whole war. They have been prolific in excuses and evasions; and in nothing else.

When compulsory enlistment by selective draft was adopted they demanded a return to voluntary service . . .

They want the voluntary system not in order that they may voluntarily enlist, but that they may voluntarily refuse to enlist.

In short they have done nothing in the war as yet and they hope to do nothing for the remainder of the war . . .

The general election of December 17 is to decide whether or not they are to take charge of Canada for the remainder of the war.

The man who votes against the Union Government votes for Bolsheviki rule in Canada.³⁵

³³Calgary Herald, November 5, 1917.

³⁴Victoria Times, November 5, 1917; also, Vancouver Sun, November 5, 1917.

³⁵Manitoba Free Press, November 28, 1917.

Quebec. It was contended that Bourassa and the Nationalist party controlled Laurier and directed his policies.³⁶ Laurier and Bourassa were portrayed as fiendish conspirators plotting to undermine Canadian patriotism and unity. Western Canadians had arrived at the conclusion that "if Sir Wilfrid Laurier were elected it would be the attitude of the Quebec membership as a solid bloc that would prevail."³⁷ The height of anti-Quebec feeling in Western Canada was expressed by the Winnipeg Telegram, a Conservative newspaper, in the aftermath of the Halifax disaster on 6 December 1917:

It is a thousand pities, for the sake of Canada that since this tragedy had to take place, it should have happened in a decent, patriotic, law-abiding city like Halifax, instead of in the city of Quebec, for example.

In Quebec it would have been of inestimable value as an object lesson to those who made so little of the danger . . . of this war to Canada.³⁸

To promote an anti-Quebec bias it was clearly shown that French-Canadian participation in the conflict was almost non-existent. In the end the electorate was asked: "Shall Quebec which will neither fight, nor pay, rule?"³⁹

The Unionist campaign appealed to the patriotism and honor of Western Canadians. Canadians were continuously reminded to "keep faith" with the "boys" at the front who had enthusiastically and voluntarily marched off to war in the interest of Canada and civilization:

Are you going to desert the boys at the front in their hour of need? A vote for a Laurier candidate on Monday will be a vote for the slackers and quitters. It will be tantamount to serving a notice to the Canadians at the front that you can no longer support them; that you are prepared in effect to desert them and leave them to

³⁶Calgary Herald, November 27, 1917.

³⁷Victoria Times, November 28, 1917.

³⁸Winnipeg Telegram, December 7, 1917.

³⁹Manitoba Free Press, December 11, 1917; also, Calgary Herald, November 27, 1917.

The Issue in this Election!

Shall Canada continue to Fight,
or shall she slink from the field?

This Election is the most awful crisis in our history:—

Are we going to retain the honor
of Canada, or are we to be known
to the world as a nation of
quitters?

Are we going to retain our place
in the world's markets, or are
we to lose both foreign credit
and trade?

Are we going to place ourselves under the domination
of the French Canadians, who, by spurning their duty
in this war, made Conscription necessary?

Patriotic Canadians Carry On!

On December 17th these questions will be answered by the voters of Canada at home and overseas. The brave men and women in France who have sacrificed home comfort and loved ones for our liberty, the men and women at home who believe in Canada, believe in the cause and in the maintenance of Canada's honor, will cast their votes to

Support Union Government

The representative men of the two great political parties came together in Union Government to make Canada's effort in the war most effective in the support of our men at the front with additional forces, and to direct and control the industrial and economic life of Canada to the one end of winning the war. An additional 100,000 reinforcements are urgently needed. Union Government will continue to raise the force quickly and impartially under the provisions of the Military Service Act, 1917. Laurier, Bourassa and Quebec think we have done enough, and are in favor of deserting our men, breaking our pledge, ruining the country's credit with our Allies, and trailing Canada's honor in the mud of world opinion. Quebec, having failed to do her duty, is now trying to bend the rest of Canada to her will.

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fate, whatever it may be. You encouraged them to go; would it be fair or decent or honest to desert them now? For the sake of the boys at the front vote on Monday for Union Government and the good faith of Canada with its brave defenders.⁴⁰

A vote for Laurier was seen as a national calamity. It was believed by many that the election would determine the nation's moral strength and destiny:

The battle front of this war is not in distant France or Flanders . . . it is in the soul of the nation. "To be or not to be, that is the question": whether this Dominion is to "carry on" as a sentient democratic nation dedicated to the cause of the living and the memory of the heroic dead, or whether it is to become a congeries of the two-and-seventy jarring sects and factions, driven together not by a unifying national conviction but the determination to perpetuate and to exploit the contemptible rule of faction, no matter what may be the cost to the nation and the nation's cause.

In that sense December 17 will be Doomsday. The contest is not an election but a destiny and beyond all reasonable doubt it is a conflict for the soul of this nation.⁴¹

4. An Unprecedented Defeat For Liberalism

The resounding defeat of the Liberal party in Western Canada was greeted as a triumph for national honor and for the principle of compulsory military service. The news media jubilantly proclaimed:

Canada was saved yesterday -- from shame, from national futility, from treachery to her Allies, from treason to the holiest cause for which men

⁴⁰Calgary Herald, December 15, 1917; similar editorials appeared also in Winnipeg Telegram, November 12, 1917.

⁴¹Manitoba Free Press, December 13, 1917. In British Columbia the Liberal Unionist newspapers, the Victoria Times and the Vancouver Sun, refrained generally from making conscription as passionate an issue as in the other Western provinces.

have ever fought and died.⁴²

There was only one issue. The people were asked to decide whether the reinforcements needed for the Canadian armies at the front should be raised by conscription, or whether the country should continue to rely upon the principle of voluntary service. The verdict is in favor of conscription. Without doubt it will be patriotically, if not cheerfully accepted.⁴³

The election returns of Western Canada left no doubt as to the intense feeling of the majority of English-speaking Canadians in those regions of the country on the questions of conscription and Union Government. Since his rise to power in 1896, Laurier had never been rejected so totally by Western Canada.⁴⁴ In Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta the Liberal party captured 20.3, 20.9 and 35.5 per cent of the electorate respectively, while in British Columbia it attracted only 25.6 per cent of the popular vote. As shown in the opening remarks of this chapter, the onus of Laurier's defeat cannot be placed on the disfranchisement of the alien by the Borden Government. The Liberal electoral reversal of 1917 must be seen as a strong popular manifestation of opposition to Laurier's anti-conscription program.

In the province of Manitoba the Grit party succeeded in capturing only one of fifteen seats. Generally indicative of the electoral pattern in a bi-cultural constituency in the election of 1917, the riding of Provencher, which had consistently voted Liberal since 1904, represented the only constituency in Western Canada with a French-Canadian population exceeding the size of the Anglo-Saxon community. J.P. Molly, the Laurier

⁴²Manitoba Free Press, December 8, 1917.

⁴³Vancouver Sun, December 18, 1917. Similar interpretations were expressed at the time by the Calgary Herald, Victoria Times and the Winnipeg Telegram.

⁴⁴Refer to Appendix 17 for statistical data.

candidate who had been member of parliament for the constituency since 1908, was elected by a narrow margin of 135 votes. Provencher had a total population of 26,271 of which 5,112 were Anglo-Saxons, 5,557 French-Canadians and 5,151 Austro-Germans.⁴⁵ Unfortunately the lack of statistical correlation between the Sessional papers which provide a riding by riding electoral breakdown and the census for the period prevents a proper in-depth analysis of polling divisions in Western Canada; however, from all available evidence it would seem that French Canadians in Western Canada did, on the whole, strongly favor Liberalism.

In all of the fourteen Manitoba ridings in which Union Government triumphed there had been virtually no contest: three constituencies were won by popular acclamation and in the remaining eleven the Unionist candidate prevailed with no less than one thousand vote majority excluding the military vote.⁴⁶ In the large metropolitan areas like Winnipeg South the voting gap in favor of Union Government was increased to as much as 13,000 votes.⁴⁷

Liberalism suffered an even more humiliating defeat in Saskatchewan where the Liberal party managed to obtain a mere 25.9 per cent of the total popular vote and failed to secure any seat in the province. In stark contrast, in the reciprocity election of 1911, Liberalism had

⁴⁵Census of Prairie Provinces 1916.

⁴⁶In only one of the fourteen Manitoba constituencies in which Union Government proved victorious did the Liberal party obtain more than forty per cent of the civilian popular vote. In the riding of Springfield with a relatively large French-Canadian population the Liberal party polled approximately forty-three per cent of the non-military vote. Of a total population of 53,082, 15,498 was classified as British and 5,728 as French Canadian. Ibid.

⁴⁷As in the case of Winnipeg South the Liberal party managed to attract barely thirteen per cent of the popular civilian vote.

not only taken nine of the ten seats but had also collected 59.4 per cent of the popular vote.⁴⁸ Union Government met feeble opposition and easily triumphed in all sixteen Saskatchewan ridings, polling 72 per cent of the popular vote.⁴⁹ This latter figure would be considerably larger if the four acclamations in favor of Union Government in the province had been taken into account in computing the popular vote.

Alberta Liberalism provided the most undaunted opposition to Union Government in Western Canada in 1917. Unlike the other Liberal organizations in Western Canada which had crumbled under the pressure of popular demand for conscription and Union Government, in Alberta under the astute and faithful direction of Frank Oliver, the popular editor of the Edmonton Bulletin and member of parliament for Edmonton, and C.W. Cross, a prominent provincial cabinet minister, the Liberal party was kept from complete disintegration. Nonetheless, Liberalism met an unprecedented electoral reversal in the province. In the previous two elections of 1908 and 1911 in which Alberta had participated as a separate province, the Liberal party had triumphed easily over the Conservative opposition, respectively polling 56.6 and 59.4 per cent of the popular vote in the elections; whereas, in 1917 it collected only 35.5 per cent of the popular vote.

Although Union Government took 61% of the popular vote and secured eleven of the twelve seats in Alberta, in several constituencies the electoral contest was close without the inclusion of the military vote. The Liberal party would have taken one other seat solely on the basis of

⁴⁸ Similarly in the election of 1908 the Liberal party had seized nine of ten seats in the province and had allured 56.6 per cent of the popular vote.

⁴⁹ In only two of the sixteen constituencies won by Union Government in Saskatchewan did the Liberal party receive more than forty per cent of the civilian popular vote.

the civilian vote. But in ten of the twelve seats Union Government defeated the Liberal party with large majorities.⁵⁰

The Liberal victory in the constituency of Victoria was a clear manifestation of the undying spirit of Liberalism in Alberta. William H. White the Liberal candidate in 1917 who had represented the riding of Victoria since its creation under the act of 1906-1907 was again re-elected in 1917 with 47.3 per cent of the popular vote. Besides having the past in his favor, W.H. White also had the pro-conscriptionist label to assist him to victory. Mr. White had voted with the Borden Government on the issue of conscription. In retrospect, considering that Alberta had been one of the strongest citadels of Liberalism in Western Canada since its entry into confederation as a province, Union Government's victory in 1917 in the province was of greater magnitude than official figures would suggest.

Union Government also made a clear sweep of the thirteen constituencies in British Columbia.⁵¹ Of the thirteen seats, in only two of them did the Liberal party manage to poll more than forty per cent of the popular civilian vote. Without the inclusion of the large military vote the Liberal party would have secured one of the latter two seats. In the end, the Liberal party received the popular support of 25.6% of the British Columbia vote, while Union Government obtained 68.4 per cent of the popular vote.⁵² For a province which had favored Liberalism in three of

⁵⁰Five of the 11 ridings which went Unionist in 1917 gave the Liberal party more than forty per cent of the popular vote.

⁵¹In British Columbia Union Government was elected by acclamation in only one constituency, the constituency of Yale.

⁵²In 1917 the largest third party vote in the nation was polled in British Columbia. A total of 6.1 per cent of the voting electorate favored third party candidates who were invariably labor representatives. This rather large protest vote was indicative of the electoral pattern in the province since 1896. The nature and source of working-class political discontent in the province must be seen essentially as a reaction to the capitalist oriented and biased structure of traditional party politics in the country and not as peculiar anti-conscriptionist movement.

the five general elections since 1896, the Unionist victory in 1917 in British Columbia was both decisive and unmistakably one-sided.

For the most part Western Canadians in the election of 1917 responded to conscription rather than to party ideology, traditional loyalties, and sectional issues.

CHAPTER V

MARITIMES

The politics of the Maritimes has been governed by a strong spirit of parochialism. This tendency to focus on local issues even when confronted with pressing national problems has been nurtured by the heterogeneous and agrarian nature of the region's economy. With a slow urbanization rate the Maritimes in the First World War period were predominantly agrarian communities,¹ lacking extensive industrial activity, and primarily involved in the pursuit of a subsistence livelihood. Hugh G. Thorburn, in his study of politics in New Brunswick, has commented on the electoral behaviour of the Maritime farmer:

Most of the farming of the province is of a subsistence nature, and the subsistence farmer is the person most likely to form loyalties of a most limited kind. His success in life is due to his own efforts and those of his family; consequently, he is an individual suspicious of ideas of interdependence and co-operation. Moreover, he has not travelled

1	1911		
	urban	rural	% of rural population
New Brunswick	99,547	252,342	72%
Nova Scotia	186,128	306,310	62%
Prince Edward Island	14,970	78,758	84%
<u>Fifth Census 1911.</u>			

widely . . . hence he thinks in terms of his parish or county, rather than of the province, the region, or the country. In politics his aim, therefore, is to secure local improvements and social security legislation that will benefit himself and his family directly.²

The Maritime electorate, traditionally unaffected by national issues, and strongly attached to the Liberal party since 1896, proved a stubborn force in the path of Union Government in 1917. Both in Nova Scotia and in Prince Edward Island the conscription issue, partly due to the equivocal stance of most Liberals in those provinces, triggered little change in the electoral behavior of the Maritimers; however, in New Brunswick, with a large French-Canadian population, conscription destroyed traditional party affiliation and induced a pronounced racial rupture in the electorate. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's tolerant attitude to conscription, allowing Liberal candidates to support conscription while remaining loyal to his leadership, was the most important factor preventing the Liberal electorate in Nova Scotia from mass desertion. In Prince Edward Island the election was fought mainly on local issues.

1. New Brunswick

The province of New Brunswick was first settled by the French in the early part of the seventeenth century. In 1713 the Acadian territory came under British control. The conquest of New France in 1763 and the large influx of loyalists from the United States after the American revolutionary war of 1776 and a steady stream of immigrants from the British Isles

²Hugh G. Thorburn, Politics in New Brunswick. University of Toronto Press. 1961. 48.

doomed the remaining Acadian population to a minority role in New Brunswick society. The scattered remnants of the Acadian population, inspired by their Catholic faith and by the myth of their martyrdom and survival, isolated themselves from the Anglophones and established tightly-knit agrarian communities in the northern and eastern sectors of the province. Their collective struggle for cultural survival, spearheaded by the Catholic clergy, gave the Acadian community of New Brunswick a sense of political and social solidarity.

In 1917 a little more than twenty-five per cent of New Brunswick's population was of French-Canadian descent,³ congregating largely in three northeastern constituencies -- Kent, Gloucester and Restigouche-Madawaska. In the conscription election the French-Canadian electorate of New Brunswick voted en masse for the Liberal party, vigorously opposing the Military Service Act; whereas, the predominantly English-speaking areas overwhelmingly favored Union Government.

New Brunswick had been a virtual stronghold of Liberalism since Confederation, the Liberals winning a majority of federal seats in that province in seven of the twelve general elections prior to 1917. Furthermore, the Liberal party had emerged victorious in the four federal elections held in New Brunswick in the period 1900-1911. Although conscription did not alter the French-Canadian loyalty to the Liberal party in 1917; it did, however, radically transform the traditional Anglo-Saxon Liberal allegiance in the province. As in Ontario the two main Canadian cultural groups, English and French, collided on the issue of compulsory military service.

³In 1911 New Brunswick's population totalled 351,889 of which 99,611 were of French-Canadian descent. op.cit. Fifth Census, 1911.

The Maritime Liberal leaders had been reluctant to sever their political ties with Laurier, possessing nothing but scorn for the Borden administration; however, Sir Wilfrid's unwillingness to adopt conscription as part of the Liberal program compelled some Liberals to find common grounds with Borden and to join him finally in a coalition government. The Hon. Frank B. Carvell, the most eminent Liberal in the Maritimes, who had been expected to succeed Laurier as party leader, led the defection of Liberals in the Maritimes. Carvell, a fierce critic of the Borden Government, justified his decision to join Union Government in a letter to his constituents of Victoria and Carleton:

The real question before the electors of Canada today is whether or not this dominion will do its full duty, not only to itself, the empire at large, and civilization of the world, but to the soldiers who have already gone forward, many of whom have made the supreme sacrifice . . .

When the Military Service Act was introduced in Parliament by the present premier in the month of May last, a sharp cleavage arose, not only in Parliament, but throughout Canada at large, and, in voting upon this all important measure unfortunately twenty-five of my colleagues, and myself found ourselves at variance with our leader as to the advisability of supporting selective conscription . . .

Four long months my colleagues and myself attempted to find some common ground with our leader on this great issue . . . but unfortunately we failed; and, believing as I do, that the first duty of every citizen is to do his utmost, to the successful prosecution of this war . . . I decided to accept the position in the Union government. . .⁴

For the secessionist Liberals Union Government was not an end in itself but a means to an end.

⁴St. John Daily Telegram and Sun, November 8, 1917.

Prior to the formation of Union Government the exponents of Liberalism in New Brunswick had voiced their utter condemnation of the franchise act, interpreting it to be "an electioneering measure" designed to give the Borden government "a trial by a jury of its own choosing."⁵ In the advent of Union Government it had been possible for Liberals in New Brunswick to support both conscription and the party organization, but once the vanguard of Liberalism in the province had decided that loyalty to Laurier meant the defeat of conscription, the rank and file rallied behind Union Government.

The Daily Telegraph avoided a "headlong endorsation" of Union Government until the entire personnel and program of the new reconstructed government had been divulged, while professing that "the war issue is absolutely paramount, and any sincere effort or achievement likely to enlarge Canada's contribution to the Allied cause in men, in money, and in justly distributed sacrifices by the whole population, will naturally be welcome."⁶ With the official announcement that Frank Carvell had accepted the portfolio of public works in the new government, the Daily Telegraph was converted to the ranks of Union Government with one stipulated reservation that "the Union plan must be judged by results."⁷ It was argued that Liberals of Carvell's stripe had not forfeited their Liberalism by their espousal of Union Government but rather that they had nobly suppressed party politics in a common national endeavor to promote the vigorous prosecution of the war:

⁵Ibid., September 7, 1917.

⁶Ibid., October 13, 1917.

⁷Ibid., November 3, 1917.

Those Liberals who joined Sir Robert Borden's cabinet were actuated by a strict sense of duty; they did so reluctantly and with no desire to save the Conservative government from the punishment it may have deserved from the people of its mistakes; they did so because they thought it was in the best interests of the country and the one thing that would now save Canada from shirking its duty in the war.⁸

The election campaign in New Brunswick inevitably centred around the question of conscription. The electorate was given a clear-cut choice:

. . . Union government stands for continued Canadian support to our boys overseas, and for war to victory. Liberals, Conservatives, Workingmen, Independents, who think there is any other issue deceive themselves, and unwittingly give support to the enemy. This issue is in no sense one of old parties, in no sense one of men. What hangs in the balance is not the triumph of Borden or Laurier, but continued Canadian war participation. Those who stand for that are the candidates supporting Union . . .⁹

In his campaign for Union Government the Hon. Frank Carvell set forth the paramount issue at stake in the election:

It is very well to say that when the Germans come to Canada we will fight, but the only place to defend it is by sending men there. There is no army like that of Canada that has done what Canadians have done. When there is a hard place to be taken the other troops are withdrawn and the Canadians are sent in to take it and the French-Canadians are as good as any.

The issue boils itself down to one simple little question: Are you willing that Canada shall stand up to the end or are you going to quit like Russia has quit?¹⁰

Sir Wilfrid Laurier's manifesto and referendum proposal were simply dismissed by the press as deceptive devices intended to create the impression that there were other issues besides conscription at stake and

⁸Ibid., November 10, 1917.

⁹Saint John Globe, November 15, 1917.

¹⁰St. John Daily Telegram and Sun, November 20, 1917.

that Laurier was not really hostile to conscription.¹¹ Le Moniteur Acadien, a Conservative newspaper which had voiced the aspirations of the Acadian community since 1867, endorsed Union Government in 1917 and consequently lost most of its subscribers to the anti-conscriptionist L'Evangeline and was finally liquidated in 1918.¹² Le Moniteur Acadien seriously questioned the sincerity of Laurier's referendum proposal. It argued that if Laurier had been truly interested in consulting the people on the question of conscription, why had he not taken that step in 1904 when his administration legislated in favor of compulsory military service. Le Moniteur went on to say that in 1904

Le monde était alors en paix, le Canada était en paix. N'était-ce pas alors le temps de tenir un referendum si un referendum est nécessaire, afin de savoir si nous allions avoir lu ce pays le service militaire obligatoire? Aujourd'hui le Canada est en proie à la guerre; nous sommes en danger de passer sous la domination allemande et il est nécessaire pour nous de ne pas perdre le temps afin de nous organiser pour résister à l'ennemi . . .¹³

In New Brunswick, Laurier did not escape the oft-repeated indictment that he was dominated by French Canada to the detriment of the national interest:

Quebec looks to Laurier to defeat the Military Service Bill, and Laurier standing by Quebec, will make the supreme effort of his life in behalf of his compatriots.¹⁴

From beginning to end, the election campaign in New Brunswick revolved around the pivotal issue of conscription:

¹¹Saint John Globe, November 5, 1917.

¹²op.cit. Thorburn, 35-39.

¹³Le Moniteur Acadien, November 24, 1917.

¹⁴Saint John Globe, November 10, 1917.

The last word before election must of necessity be a reminder that the issue is the war and nothing but the war. Although Sir Wilfrid Laurier and certain of his followers, in and out of Parliament, refused to give support to the formation of a National Government for the more energetic prosecution of Canada's war effort, a National government was formed for that express purpose. It is that government, and not the old government of Sir Robert Borden, which asks your support. The question you have to decide as your conscience dictates is not whether the old Conservative government did things it should not have done, but whether the Union government, made up of influential men of the Liberal and Conservative party, can more satisfactorily give expression to Canada's war desires at this time than can a purely party government directed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier.¹⁵

The electoral response of New Brunswick in 1917 exemplifies the electoral behaviour of the Canadian nation in microcosm. English-speaking Canadians, favoring the principle of compulsory military service and devoted to Canada's burgeoning participation in the war, voted predominantly for Union Government; French-speaking Canadians, somewhat indifferent to Canada's military role in the conflict and vehemently opposed to conscription, overwhelmingly supported the Liberal party. Le Devoir, the Nationalist Montreal newspaper played a very influential role in shaping the political attitudes of the Acadian community in 1917. A political student of New Brunswick society has alluded to the nature and magnitude of Le Devoir's ideological impact upon the French-speaking denizens of the province:

While its circulation was never great in the Acadian areas of the Maritimes, it was read by the clergy and other acknowledged leaders. The influence was at its height during the conscription crisis of 1917, when the Acadian leaders followed Quebec on the matter.¹⁶

¹⁵Ibid., December 15, 1917.

¹⁶op.cit. Thorburn, 38.

Prior to the election campaign, a French-Canadian associate of Hon. J.D. Hazen had informed the Conservative cabinet minister that Acadian opinion was generally guided by Henri Bourassa and his newspaper:

Unfortunately our Acadian people are influenced by Bourassa or his paper which has a wide circulation in New Brunswick, and this vote would be very uncertain.¹⁷

Owing to the size of the Acadian community in New Brunswick and to the pervasive influence of Le Devoir in the area, the political pundits of Union Government had conceded victory to Laurier in at least four constituencies. Frank Carvell, the Liberal Unionist in New Brunswick, had conclusively reported to Borden half-way through the election campaign that Madawaska and Restigouche, Gloucester, and Kent would invariably vote Liberal.¹⁸ It was also generally assumed that Westmoreland would render a decision favorable to the Laurierite candidate. The election returns eventually proved the prognostications of Union Government to be accurate. All four of the French-Canadian dominated ridings in New Brunswick provided sweeping victories for the Laurierite candidates.

In Gloucester, the Laurierite Liberal, Onesiphore Turgeon, who represented the constituency in parliament since 1908, was elected by acclamation in 1917. The vast demographic predominance of the French-Canadian element in the riding made it futile for a Unionist candidate to even contest the seat.¹⁹

In the constituency of Kent, with a seventy-one per cent French-speaking population, Auguste T. Leger, the Laurierite candidate easily de-

¹⁷Borden Papers, T.J. Bourgue to J.D. Hazen, June 25, 1917. 71636.

¹⁸Ibid., Frank Carvell to Borden, November 16, 1917. 71675.

¹⁹In the Acadian population comprised eighty-seven per cent of the total population of the constituency.

feated the Conservative Unionist incumbent, Ferdinand J. Robidoux. The Liberal party polled seventy-four per cent of the civilian vote in the riding. The Unionist had scored a victory in only one polling division which was predominantly English-speaking.²⁰

The crushing defeat of the Unionist candidate in Restigouche and Madawaska can also be attributed to French-Canadian opposition to conscription. The Liberal candidate, Pius Michaud, had been the parliamentary representative of Madawaska since 1906. In 1917, when Restigouche was merged with Madawaska, Pius Michaud ran as a Laurierite for the newly established riding and emerged victorious with a resounding seventy-three per cent majority of the civilian vote. A statistical breakdown of the election returns for the constituency confirms the dependence of the Liberal triumph on the French-Canadian vote.²¹

Unlike the three other New Brunswick constituencies that voted Liberal in 1917 Westmoreland, a Liberal stronghold since 1900, contained an Anglo-Saxon popular majority. However, the sizeable French-Canadian minority amounting to thirty-eight per cent of the population played a conspicuous role in the victory of the Laurierite candidate who attracted fifty-seven per cent of the civilian vote. Arthur B. Copp, the Liberal incumbent for Westmoreland, received the bulk of his vote from French-Canadian districts.²² Without the almost unanimous support of the Acadian elector the electoral decision in favor of Liberalism in Westmoreland

²⁰Refer to Appendix 18 for statistical analysis.

²¹See Appendix 19

²²Refer to Appendix 20 for additional data.

would have been in unquestionable danger.²³

The election returns for 1917 disclosed that 36.4 per cent of the New Brunswick electorate had supported the Liberal party. Since it has been shown clearly that the Acadian community which comprised at least twenty-five per cent of New Brunswick's demographic map voted almost to a man for Laurier, it can be accurately assumed that less than twenty per cent of English-speaking Canadians in the province rejected conscription and Union Government.

²³The Liberal party succeeded in obtaining more than forty per cent of the civilian vote in only two of the seven seats won by Union Government in New Brunswick. In Northumberland, where the Acadian population totalled approximately one quarter of the Anglo-Saxon population and where the Liberal party had triumphed in three consecutive general elections since 1904, Union Government emerged victorious in 1917 with 50.9 per cent of the civilian vote and with 56 per cent of the combined military and civilian vote. Owing to the lack of evidence, the success of the Liberal party in the predominantly Anglo-Saxon constituency of Charlotte can not be properly appraised; however, one would venture to speculate that the electoral contest in the riding was fought along traditional party lines rather than on the issue of conscription. Hence the political status quo was maintained in Charlotte and the traditional electoral pattern was repeated. Since 1900 the vote spread between the two parties in the riding had not exceeded 600 votes, in 1917 the margin of victory for Union Government amounted to 1047 votes.

2. Nova Scotia

In Nova Scotia, although the election campaign was fought largely on the conscription issue, it did not have a shattering effect on traditional party loyalties because there is substantial evidence to indicate that many of the Laurier candidates in the province were not hostile but sympathetic to the Military Service Act. A storm of dissatisfaction to Laurier's unyielding attitude vis à vis conscription had arisen among many of the Liberals in Nova Scotia. To stem off further insurrection among Nova Scotian Liberals Sir Wilfrid Laurier allowed party members maximum freedom regarding the question of compulsory military service. As he had done in Ontario, Laurier acquiesced in the demands of conscriptionist Liberals in the hope of salvaging the Liberal party in English Canada while he wooed the French-Canadian electorate with his officially expressed anti-conscriptionist sentiments. In a letter to a prominent Nova Scotian Liberal Sir Wilfrid suggested the three courses that were open to loyal party members:

At the meeting which we had some days ago here of the candidates in Eastern Ontario, I suggested any of the following three alternatives -- First, opposition to conscription and to Union government -- Second, opposition to Union government, favoring conscription -- Third, running as Independent Liberals.

These courses I suggested, well knowing that there were some among those candidates who could not avoid supporting conscription.

The only thing I would ask, is that no hasty action be taken by our friends. It cannot be the opinion of our Unionist friends that there should be no opposition in Parliament. It would be a calamity if all the opposition came from Quebec. They must recognize themselves, in view of their repeated assurances that they do not

forsake their Liberal principle, that in the interest of the country it is preferable that the opposition should be maintained on the old lines.²⁴

The need to break party lines on account of conscription was eliminated to a great extent by the sympathetic attitude to conscription adopted by several Nova Scotian Laurierite Liberals.

While the Liberal party captured only four of the sixteen seats in Nova Scotia, it polled 45.5% of the popular vote. This latter figure is somewhat misleading as to the percentage of English-speaking Canadians supporting the Liberal party in 1917 in the province. It must be remembered that four Nova Scotian constituencies, representing more than one-fourth of the entire provincial electorate, were won by acclamation for Union Government.²⁵ The popular opposition to Liberalism in these four constituencies was not taken into account in computing the popular percentage vote for the province. Furthermore, Nova Scotia had relatively large Acadian and German-Canadian communities which strongly favored Liberalism. Taking these two factors into consideration, it would seem that the vast majority of the Anglo-Saxon electorate of Nova Scotia voted in favor of Union Government and conscription in 1917 contrary to what official returns seemed to indicate.

Union Government was heralded in Nova Scotia as a triumph of patriotism over partyism and as the ultimate agency assuring the continued vigorous participation of Canada in the Great War.²⁶ While the Conservative press, led by the Halifax Herald, enthusiastically lauded the adop-

²⁴ Laurier Papers, Laurier to E.M. Macdonald, October 30, 1917. 197884.

²⁵ Seats won by acclamation in Nova Scotia: Colchester, Halifax (double seat), and Shelburn and Queen's. These four constituencies embraced a population of 128,132. The entire population of Nova Scotia totalled 492,338. Fifth Census 1911.

²⁶ Halifax Herald, October 13, 1917; also New Glasgow Evening News, October 18, 1917.

tion of conscription and the concept of Union Government, the Liberal press, under the influence of the Halifax Morning Chronicle, showed a less rabid brand of support for these latter issues but nonetheless gave explicit endorsement to them. The Chronicle opposed the Borden regime, not the policies of conscription and coalition.²⁷ The election campaign consequently revolved around the single issue of conscription:

The issue before the country is perfectly plain and clear-cut. A government has been formed for the one sole purpose of uniting all Canadians in one grand supreme effort to support and reinforce our gallant sons now yonder in France and Flanders, to assist in every possible way our Empire and our Allies in the mighty conflict for the preservation of civilization, and destroy once and forever the foul curse of a mad autocracy that would enslave humanity. Every patriotic Canadian is in duty bound to support such a government as that. The most iniquitous thing in the history of this country is the present effort on the part of some mad men among us to create internal strife, inflame party passion and engineer what, without doubt, will prove to be the most bitter electoral contest which Canada has yet known.²⁸

A strict sense of moral commitment to their gallant men on the field of battle compelled many Nova Scotians to espouse the principle of compulsory military service. A victory for Laurier was regarded as a step towards national degradation:

If Laurier wins and Canada drops out, what will be Canada's position in the eyes of the world on the day peace is declared and the final downfall of Germany is an accomplished fact?

On that day the name of Canada would be a name synonymous with shame and disgrace. Canada would be stigmatized as a traitor to herself, to the cause for which she should have been fighting, to democracy and freedom.²⁹

²⁷J.H. Tuck, Nova Scotia and the Conscription Election of 1917. Masters Thesis. Dalhousie University. 1969. 16-29.

²⁸Halifax Herald, November 20, 1917.

²⁹Ibid., December 1, 1917.

The Liberal press shared the conviction that a vote in opposition to Union Government would culminate in national disgrace:

. . . a vote for disunion now will be a vote for the defeat of the Allies, for the triumph of Germany and for our own immediate or ultimate ruin . . . at the hands of a triumphant Germany.³⁰

Moreover, a Liberal triumph in the election would entail French-Canadian domination of Canada. It was widely thought that Laurier no longer represented English-speaking opinion but was the servile mouthpiece of French Canada. Appeals to racial pride were not uncommon during the election campaign in Nova Scotia:

Are we going to change the name of Canada for "Quebec?" If Sir Wilfrid Laurier wins, Quebec wins, and Canada is lost. If Sir Wilfrid Laurier wins Quebec rule will supercede Canadian rule.

On December 17 the people must declare for Canada and Canada's soldiers or Quebec and Quebec's slackers. They must choose between patriotism and pea soup.

Who will rule? That is the issue. Must the eight British provinces bow to the yoke of Bourassa and the men who would dishonor Canada? After December it will be Canadian rule or Quebec rule. Which?³¹

The reported attempts to suppress the freedom of speech of Unionist candidates in Quebec and the howling down of the Prime Minister in Kitchener aroused the ire of some Nova Scotians. The Halifax Herald announced that "a veritable Reign of Terror exists in Quebec." The opportunity was not lost to link Laurier with the fanaticism of the anti-conscription protesters:

³⁰Halifax Chronicle, December 6, 1917. op.cit. Tuck. 82-83.

³¹New Glasgow Evening News, December 5, 1917.

Let the loyal British people of Canada pause and ask themselves why it is that Sir Wilfrid Laurier has the support of the Nationalists of Quebec and the pro-Germans of Waterloo. To answer that question is to expose the real character and menace of Laurierism in this campaign.

Laurier stands for Canada quitting this war because it stands for that, it has the support of every racist in the province of Quebec, of every pro-German in Ontario, of enemy aliens in the West, and of every poltroon secretly or selfishly . . . recreant or hostile to our cause in this conflict.³²

On the morning of 6 December 1917 the collision of two ally ships in the harbor of Halifax, one of which was laden with explosives, created an inferno of fire and destruction in the city. It was later estimated that the tragedy had taken 1,500 lives and had left some 25,000 people "homeless and destitute."³³ The total impact of the Halifax catastrophe on the election of 1917 in the province can not be properly gauged; however, one thing is certain, the event brought the perils and sufferings of war close to home, and in the end accentuated English-Canadian determination to stand by Union Government and conscription. The Halifax Herald provided an insight into the reaction of the Maritime population to the calamity:

This is no time to think or speak of politics -- these things must stand aside -- but let us remember what Halifax has endured and suffered and witnessed has all and more been grandly borne by our brave Canadian soldiers for over three dreadful years of war.

They have seen their dead piled high on shell torn fields, heard the low moaning of their mutilated wounded and have witnessed their first thinning line, eloquently appealing for much needed reinforcements.

³²Free Lance, December 4, 1917; similar editorial also appeared in the Halifax Herald, November 28, 1917.

³³Canadian Dominion Bureau of Statistics, The Canada Year Book 1918. 657.

Halifax now knows the value of swift relief. The resources of well nigh all a continent were without delay hurried to our assistance and with gratitude profound we received the proffered aid.

But how terrible our plight if no reinforcements of our medical and nursing staff, our transportation facilities, or our local relief committees had not arrived.

Now we know something of the real meaning of war.³⁴

In the wake of the disaster the election date for the Halifax area was postponed for a month. Eventually Union Government won the two Halifax seats by acclamation.

In Nova Scotia the Liberal party managed to attract substantial electoral support. It succeeded in seizing four seats and would have won seven of the sixteen provincial seats had the military vote not reversed the popular decision in three constituencies. Traditional party affiliations were not easily forgotten, but the most important factor which promoted an electoral contest along party lines in some ridings was the non-belligerent attitude toward conscription adopted by many of the Liberals in Nova Scotia. Also, the 10.5 per cent Acadian population of the province contributed considerably to the success of the Liberal party.³⁵

All four of the victorious Liberals in the election in the province can hardly be called anti-conscriptionists. Furthermore, in three of the four constituencies that voted Liberal in 1917 -- Cape Breton North and Victoria, Iverness, Antigonish and Guysborough -- the Liberal party

³⁴Halifax Herald, December 13, 1917.

³⁵The total population of Nova Scotia in 1911 was 492,338 of which 51,746 were identified as French Canadians and 39,933 were of German-Austrian descent. Fifth Census 1911.

had had complete political ascendancy since 1896.

John H. Sinclair, the Liberal candidate for Antigonish and Guysborough, had urged Sir Wilfrid early in the election campaign to abandon his referendum proposal in favor of conscription.³⁶ Laurier immediately dismissed Sinclair's suggestion as political suicide for the Grit party which had come out officially in opposition to compulsory military service without the direct consultation of the people. In turn, Laurier reiterated to Sinclair the three alternatives available to Liberal candidates.³⁷ In the end John H. Sinclair's endorsement of conscription while opposing Union Government made victory an effortless task in a strongly partisan Liberal constituency.³⁸

Daniel D. Mackenzie, who had been the Liberal M.P. for Cape Breton North and Victoria since 1908, had also briefed Laurier about his bias favoring conscription and about his antipathy of having a referendum. Consequently, Laurier approved of D.D. Mackenzie's independent stance on the question of conscription.³⁹ It would seem from all available evidence that the remaining two triumphant Liberal candidates in Nova Scotia in 1917, A.W. Chisholm of Iverness and William Duff of Lunenburg, were far from being anti-conscriptionists and straight Laurier candidates.⁴⁰

³⁶Laurier Papers, J.H. Sinclair to Laurier, October 22, 1917. 197694.

³⁷Ibid., Laurier to J.H. Sinclair, October 27, 1917. 197696.

³⁸The constituency of Antigonish and Guysborough was established in 1917 by uniting the riding of Antigonish which had been represented in parliament by a Liberal since 1896 with the riding of Guysborough which had voted consistently Liberal since 1882. In 1917 J.H. Sinclair who had been twice before (1908, 1911) elected to represent Guysborough was given a strong popular mandate by the new constituency. He defeated his Unionist rival by margin of 3,944 to 2,506 votes.

³⁹Laurier Papers, D.D. Mackenzie to Laurier, October 6, 1917. 197321.

⁴⁰op.cit. J.M. Beck. 141; also, Halifax Herald, November 24, 1917.

In Lunenburg county, the Liberal nominee, Mayor William Duff of Lunenburg had openly declared himself from the outset of the election campaign in favor of all necessary war measures. At one point in the election campaign he had offered his services to Union Government but his overtures were rejected by the local Conservative party. As a result the election campaign in Lunenburg focused on party loyalty rather than on the issue of conscription.⁴¹

The sympathetic attitude to conscription taken by most Nova Scotia Liberals coupled with the traditional strength of Liberalism in the four constituencies that were captured by the Liberal party in 1917 made a party fight in many parts of the province inevitable, while the Acadian vote bolstered the Liberal victories.⁴²

The electoral behaviour of the Acadian community in Nova Scotia in 1917 can be briefly illustrated. In Cape Breton South-Richmond, the straight Liberal candidates, Kyte and Carroll, were afforded victories on the civilian vote primarily as a result of the heavy support rendered them by the predominantly Acadian populated area of Richmond county. A Union majority of 1,333 civilian votes in Cape Breton South was nullified by a Liberal majority of 2,317 in Richmond county. In 1917 the Liberal party obtained sixty-nine per cent of the vote in Richmond as compared to fifty-five and fifty-six per cent for the 1908 and 1911 elections. The overwhelming support afforded Liberalism by the Acadians in Nova Scotia can be seen even more strikingly in the election returns for Yarmouth-Clare. The election returns for the three major geographical areas of the latter constituency revealed the following data: in

⁴¹op.cit. Tuck. 71.

⁴²For an indication of the electoral behaviour of the Acadian vote in the province refer to Appendix 21 and 22.

Clare, a predominantly Acadian sector, the Liberal candidate, J.W. Comeau proved victorious in every poll and secured ninety-one per cent of the popular vote; in Yarmouth, an Anglo-Saxon district, the Liberal aspirant failed to win any of the polls and attracted only twelve per cent of the popular vote; in Argyle, with a mixed French and English population, Comeau took eight of fifteen polls and sixty per cent of the vote. Electoral returns from Acadian communities in Nova Scotia in 1917 tend to suggest that the Acadian voter sided with Laurier in opposition to Union Government and conscription.⁴³

Equally important to the Liberal success in the province was the non-hostile posture to conscription taken by many Liberals. This latter influence was apparent not only in those constituencies in which the Liberal party emerged victorious but also in those ridings where the Grit party was defeated but received more than forty per cent of the popular civilian vote, Liberalism had adapted itself to the moods of the electorate and thus avoided a head-on confrontation with Union Government on the question of conscription and in the end forced a traditional party fight in the province. A student of the 1917 election in Nova Scotia has aptly concluded that because

. . . the conscription issue was not placed before the electorate in terms of a clear alternative, yes or no, in much of Nova Scotia . . . does not indicate that the issue was unimportant, but that neither party was willing to commit political suicide to present Nova Scotians with this clear alternative. The issue was so-potentially dangerous to the Liberals in Nova Scotia, in fact, that they were prepared, if necessary, to reject their revered leader Laurier's own personal policy on the matter.⁴⁴

⁴³op.cit. Tuck. 120.

⁴⁴Ibid., 147.

For example, in the constituency of Pictou, which had voted Liberal since 1904, the Liberal candidate in 1917, R.H. Mackay, had initially won the seat with a majority of 143 votes prior to the tabulation of the military vote; with the inclusion of the latter the Unionist candidate, A. McGregor, emerged as the final victor. The closeness of the contest in Pictou can be attributed to the fact that the election campaign was largely fought along party lines because the Liberal candidate did not oppose conscription. Mr. R.H. Mackay had been criticized by the exponents of Union Government for "trying to be a Laurier Liberal and a George H. Murray Liberal at the same time."⁴⁵ The Liberal candidate in Pictou had pledged himself to support vigorously all policies that would enhance Canadian participation in the conflict while remaining within the fold of the Liberal party. At Mackay's nominating convention it had been resolved that

the paramount issue before the people of Canada is the winning of the war, that every other consideration should be subordinated to this one, that all our resources and energies should be employed as to give the greatest assistance to the mother country in the prosecution of the war and this convention relies upon its nominee to support every measure tending to this end, whether proposed by Union or party government.⁴⁶

Deprived of the volatile issue of conscription, Union Government failed to attract dissenters from the ranks of Liberalism in many of the traditional Liberal ridings of Nova Scotia.

The extent of anti-conscriptionist feeling in Nova Scotia is difficult to measure owing to the widespread support of conscription by Liberal candidates in the province. To determine what portion of the

⁴⁵New Glasgow Evening News, November 26, 1917.

⁴⁶Free Lance, November 20, 1917.

45.5 per cent of the popular vote received by the Liberal party in Nova Scotia represented bona fide anti-conscriptionist thought is impossible, but it is certain that an inestimable number of Liberal electors were kept in the party fold as a result of the pro-conscriptionist attitude advanced by Liberal candidates. Added to this fact, one-quarter of the Nova Scotia electorate that voted Union Government by acclamation was not included in the final calculations relating to the percentage of the popular vote. It would seem therefore that the popular support of Liberalism in Nova Scotia would have been much less than indicated by official figures, and that the principle of compulsory military service was endorsed by the vast majority of Nova Scotians.

3. Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island, by far the smallest province in Canada, embracing approximately 1.3 per cent of the nation's population in 1911, totally agrarian in character and isolated from the mainstream of Canadian life, had always displayed a lack of appreciation for the wider issues in time of federal elections. The Islanders have been invariably politically self-centered and relatively indifferent to questions of national magnitude. In the election of 1917 the Island province, true to its spirit of localism, remained politically undisturbed by the conscription issue. The concept of Union Government failed to precipitate any movement in the direction of non-partisan politics. The election campaign was conducted strictly along party lines, each party attempting to prove that their respective organizations had offered the greatest amount of social and economic benefits to the province. Consequently, the conscription issue was forced to take a back seat to indigenous questions.

In the advent of coalition government, the Island Patriot, the spokesman of Liberalism in Prince Edward Island, had categorically condemned the Borden administration for legislating the "iniquitous election act."⁴⁷ With an election in the offing, the Patriot denounced the Borden Government on its past record and outlined the main issue in the forthcoming election:

The issue in the elections is the record of the Government. The questions are: "Shall we put back in power a Government which has failed in all the higher duties to the country and made one huge carnival of graft out of the management of this war? Or shall we place in office the greatest of living Canadian

⁴⁷Island Patriot, September 19, 1917.

statesmen who for fifteen years governed this nation and recreated it industrially and commercially and gave it the very brightest record in the world in relative progress? Shall we place in office the party which supplied rotten shoes, blind binoculars, lame horses and worthless outfits to the boys condemned to line and train in the quagmire of Salisbury Plain, or the party which enacted the British preference? Shall we place in power the party which put a half billion dollars of financial responsibility upon the people in order to make multi-millionaires of the investors in the Canadian Northern venture, or the party which built the splendid Transcontinental and Grand Trunk Pacific.⁴⁸

As to the question of compulsory military service the Patriot took the view that since conscription had been made law it was no longer an issue in the election. Although the Island Patriot was impressed by the personnel of Union Government, it remained faithful to the Liberal party, emphasizing the loyalty, honesty and patriotism of the local Liberals. Preference for the democratic spirit of Liberalism rather than opposition to conscription, motivated Liberals in Prince Edward Island in their rejection of Union Government:

Spurious Unionism, supported by disfranchising acts, arbitrary authority, autocratic pretensions and political trickery, spells civil war and revolution in Canada as it did in Russia.

It incites racial and religious animosities, provokes the people to wrath and retribution and creates a danger which may disrupt confederation itself.

All the Liberal candidates, Messrs. Warburton, Sinclair, Hughes and Read stand behind Laurier in his fight for democracy and government of the people, by the people and for the people so it shall not perish from the earth.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Ibid., September 21, 1917.

⁴⁹Ibid., November 21, 1917.

Speaking for the Liberal candidates in the province, John E. Sinclair, candidate for Queens, expressed his independence from party dictation on matters related to the vigorous prosecution of the war:

While we are supporters of the Liberal party, we will reserve to ourselves the right to support any measure that will tend to carry on the war most effectively.⁵⁰

Such vague declaration suggesting neither support nor opposition to conscription undoubtedly were intended to attract both the anti- and pro-conscriptionist Liberal vote in the province and to stifle party dissension on the potentially dangerous issue of compulsory military service.

The Liberal campaign in Prince Edward Island focused on the candidates' past achievements in obtaining financial and economic benefits for the province from the federal treasury. Mr. J.J. Hughes, Liberal candidate in King's county, who had been the federal member of parliament for the riding since 1900, was extolled for his invaluable services to his constituency. The Island Patriot meticulously listed his accomplishments:

From Confederation down to the year 1900 King's county received little from the public exchequer, but since Mr. Hughes appeared at Ottawa as county representative immediately the people's interests were looked after.

Owing to his untiring efforts a railway was built from Murray River to Murray Harbour; a railway was built from Montague to Cardigan, -- and a railway was built from Elmira to Souris.

In addition to this, other public works were constructed. A Post Office was erected at Souris; another at Georgetown was constructed for the transportation of winter freight between Prince Edward Island and the mainland.⁵¹

⁵⁰Ibid., November 24, 1917.

⁵¹Ibid., November 24, 1917.

It was also pointed out that Mr. Hughes had been responsible for the construction of innumerable wharves and boat harbours in the county and that his general mercantile business at Souris with branches throughout the county had supplied the people of the community with the necessities of life in exchange for their produce at their door steps.

In the double seat constituency of Queen's Mr. Warburton and Mr. Sinclair, the two Liberal candidates focussed their attention on the cancellation of the North Shore and New London Railway by the Borden administration after they had succeeded in obtaining one hundred thousand dollars for the projected railway scheme from the Laurier Government. The Island Patriot reported that "a strong feeling of indignation" had been aroused "on account of the North Shore and New London Railway."⁵²

Besides appealing to local dissatisfaction, the Liberal candidates in Prince Edward Island repeatedly reminded the electorate that Union Government was only a façade for the old corrupt Tory Government which had managed the economy of the country and had abetted corruption, nepotism, and profiteering throughout the war period.

The Charlottetown Examiner, a Conservative newspaper, was as equally partisan as the Patriot in the election campaign. The War-Times Election Act was hailed as a "prudent" measure⁵³ and the formation of Union Government was received with unqualified endorsement.⁵⁴

The Unionist campaign in Prince Edward Island gave equal attention to the question of conscription and to local issues. In a brief election manifesto presented to the electors of Queen's county, Donald

⁵²Ibid., November 27, 1917; also, November 29, 1917.

⁵³Charlottetown Examiner, September 10, 1917.

⁵⁴Ibid., October 13, 1917.

Nicholson, the Unionist contender, spoke of the benefits that his constituency had derived from the Borden administration:

During the years that have passed since then I have endeavored to the best of my ability to procure as large a portion, as possible of government advantages for my native province. The government of the party I was elected to support has done much for the betterment of our trade and commerce and our agricultural interests. It gave us the Car Ferry, increased grants to agriculture, the addition of \$100,000 annually to our provincial subsidy, secured for our provinces four members for all time to come, built a number of wharves for the convenience of farmers and shippers, also dredged the docks at Charlottetown and elsewhere.⁵⁵

Referring to the question of conscription the electorate was asked: "Are the people of Canada to leave unsupported our brave boys at the Front, who have so long and so well fought for the preservation of our rights and liberties, and whose splendid deeds of heroism have covered Canada with glory and renown?"⁵⁶ In this way the Unionist campaign in Prince Edward Island appealed to both the patriotism and to the self-interest of the community.

The Examiner perpetually stressed the benefits that had accrued to the Islanders from the Borden Government. It was stated that

If the alleged extravagance of the late administration of Sir Robert Borden may be fairly urged against the Union Administration, then we may fairly urge in favor of the present Administration the increase of Prince Edward Island's subsidy by \$100,000 a year, the assistance rendered to Agricultural education in Prince Edward Island to the extent of \$300,000 per year, the change in the B.N.A. Act by which Prince Edward Island is to retain four members in the House of Commons for all time to come, and the Car Ferry.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Ibid., October 27, 1917.

⁵⁶Ibid., October 27, 1917.

⁵⁷Ibid., November 24, 1917.

Besides urging the electorate to support Union Government on the basis of gratitude for all the improvements and benefits bestowed upon the province by Sir Robert Borden, the Examiner goaded the people to ally themselves with Union Government because victory for the Government meant reinforcements for the Canadian army, greater honor for Canada, closer ties with the Empire and renewed consecration to the cause of "freedom, justice, mercy, humanity, civilization and christianity."⁵⁸

At no time during the election campaign did the Examiner express the anti-Quebec feeling that had been prevalent in other areas of English-speaking Canada. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's bid for the premiership of the country was not criticized on the grounds of his French-Canadian background but rather on the grounds that he, at the age of seventy-seven, was incapable of managing the turbulent affairs of the state, lacking the physical stamina and mental foresight to handle the pressing problems confronting the nation, especially in regard to Canada's continued participation in the war.⁵⁹

The election campaign of both parties in Prince Edward Island had focussed largely on local issues and on the past record of Liberal and Conservative administration. As such, conscription became a secondary issue. Since the Liberal candidate in the province displayed little if any hostility to conscription, traditional party affiliations were left undisturbed, making the measurement of anti-conscriptionist feeling in Prince Edward Island virtually impossible.

The election result in all four constituencies of the Island

⁵⁸Ibid., December 1, 1917.

⁵⁹Ibid., November 27, 1917; also, December 5, 1917.

were immeasurably close. The Liberal party had initially captured all four seats but the military vote eventually handed two of the seats to Union Government. In the end, the Liberal party collected 50.2 per cent of the popular vote. The almost even split of the popular vote by the two contending parties was indicative of all federal elections in the province since 1896. Parochialism held sway over the Prince Edward Island electorate in 1917 as it had in the past because the Liberal party in the province did not oppose conscription.

CHAPTER VI

FARM OPINION, THE WAR AND THE ELECTION

1. From Pacifism To Belligerency

As events in Europe were moving towards a violent confrontation at the end of July 1914, the Western farmer in Canada complained bitterly of his oppressed position in the nation's economic structure. Like the laborer, the farmer also was feeling the tight squeeze of the economic recession prevailing in the summer of 1914. The farmer's economic difficulties were attributed to the federal government's partiality to the business interests in Ontario and in Quebec. The protective tariff, the railway fees, the exorbitant interest rate of banks and mortgage firms were all combining to make agriculture unattractive and unrewarding.¹

In no uncertain terms the Grain Growers' Guide, the most influential farm newspaper in Canada, warned the two federal parties that "the people of the Prairie Provinces are no longer satisfied to be herded into a legislative corral and plundered by the Barons of Special Privilege"²

¹Charles A. Sunning, "Western Agricultural Problems". An address delivered at the C.H.A. convention held in Montreal on June 10, 1914.

²Grain Growers' Guide, August 5, 1914.
Grain Growers' Guide, July 29, 1914.

It was pointed out that the new Redistribution Act of 1914 had bestowed the Prairie provinces with forty-three seats in the next parliament, almost doubling its previous representation of twenty-six. Throughout the war period the Western farmers were acutely aware of their new political strength and continuously reminded Ottawa of it. Thus on the eve of war the West looked disapprovingly at Ottawa waiting for the federal government to treat it more equitably.

In the early days of August 1914, when Britain was on the brink of war but not yet militarily involved in the conflict, the Grain Growers' Guide voiced the spirit of pacifism commonly associated with the agriculturalist:

The war demon is abroad in Europe and thousands of men are engaged in the slaughter of their fellow men. Those who ordered the war will be comfortably located far beyond the danger zone. But homes will be desolated, crops destroyed, children orphaned, fathers and sons killed and maimed, wives and daughters left to mourn their dead and rear their families alone. Is Canada to be forced blindly and needlessly into this horrible struggle?³

Fear and pacifism soon gave way to militant idealism. The Guide boldly advocated and justified war in the wake of British and Canadian involvement:

British civilization and British manhood is now on trial. In the great struggle which now convulses Europe Anglo-Saxonism again has been challenged and again has been told "thus far shalt thou go." The mighty issue now to be settled on the field of blood is whether British justice can be upheld by British might, whether democracy or autocracy shall triumph, whether smaller nations shall be free or whether they shall bow and yield to the brute force of military maniacs. In this fight Canada has

³Ibid., August 12, 1914.

everything at stake and must stand by
Britain to the very limit of our resources.
In self defence we must do our utmost in
the struggle in which Britishers everywhere
are now engaged.⁴

The Western farmer was able to reconcile his pacifism with his espousal of war because he interpreted the European conflict as a proximate danger to his own way of life -- " . . . the die is cast and Canada is at war, and must fight in the defence of her homes and her institutions."⁵ Since the war meant national survival it was agreed that no effort should be spared in the vigorous prosecution of the conflict.

Unlike the Prairie farmers who were primarily engrossed in the economic problems inflicted upon them by the tariff and the privileged interests in the pre-war period, the Ontario farmers were obsessed by the realization that their agricultural identity was being progressively dwarfed by the advance of urbanization. The farmer in Ontario had witnessed a sizeable decline in their numbers in the period 1896-1911 while the urban population had swelled.⁶ It is not surprising that the phenomena of rural depopulation should have colored Ontario farm opinion vis à vis the war.

⁴Ibid., August 12, 1914.

⁵Ibid., August 12, 1914. Same thought re-iterated on November 4, 1914.

⁶While the urban population of Ontario had increased by 509,491 between 1891 and 1911, the rural population for the same period had diminished by approximately 100,000. Similarly in 1891 the Canadian Census classified 61.26 per cent of the population of Ontario as rural whereas in 1911 only 47.3 per cent fell under the latter category. Sixth Census of Canada 1921 volume I. 345.

From the very beginning, Ontario farm newspapers had been prone to regard Canada's contribution to the conflict in terms of massive food supplies rather than in recruits. It was thought that although both Canadian manpower and monetary resources would be needed to promote the successful termination of the war, in the long run Canadians would be of greater assistance as food producers to feed the allied armies. In light of rural depopulation the farmer was advised by his newspapers that he would serve his country best by staying at home and producing food:

Food is the most important of the sinews of war. Without it the best trained and best armed force must fail. The men on the farms of Canada do not need to go to the front to serve their country well in this crisis. We can do it by working our farms to the limit here at home. That is our duty in the face of this terrible emergency.⁷

Every argument was mustered by the Ontario farm news media to convince the farmer that his place in the conflict was to remain on the farm. He was reminded that countless numbers of farmers in Britain and in France were being absorbed into active military service and that only the Canadian agriculturalist could possibly compensate for this crucial loss of food-producing power. Furthermore, it was argued that Canada was best suited for the role of food supplier because of its sparse and scattered population.⁸ Ontario farm leaders staunchly supported the war but they were reluctant to encourage farm enlistments in fear that their numbers would be further diminished, thus incapacitating their valuable service as food

⁷The Farm and Dairy and Rural Home, Peterboro Ontario, Ontario. August 20, 1914. Quoted from Robert W. Trowbridge, War-Time Rural Discontent and the Rise of the United Farmers of Ontario 1914-1919. M.A. Thesis, University of Waterloo, 1964. 44.

⁸Ibid., 45-47.

producers.

Although the Western farmer can be said to have espoused the war more unequivocally than his Ontario counterpart, he nevertheless did not recklessly abandon all personal interests. The Prairie agriculturalist was urged to be active and loyal in the furtherance of his social and economic needs:

. . . it is absolutely necessary that farmers keep their own organization in the best possible condition. It will be extremely unwise for the farmers to relax their education and organization work in the slightest degree.⁹

Believing that war would last for a "short time" it was of the utmost importance that the farmer combat relentlessly the "artificial burdens created by the protective tariff." The Grain Growers' Guide, unlike the Ontario farm newspapers which were overwrought by the rural depopulation problem, did not discourage farm recruitment but rather applauded the efforts of the federal government to dispatch a second Canadian contingent to the war front. The Guide regarded enlistment as both a way to alleviate the bleak unemployment conditions and a noble manifestation of patriotism.¹⁰

The United Farmers of Ontario, a farm organization which had been created in March 1914 in the wake of confusion and division that had plagued the farm movement in Ontario since its beginning in the early 1870's, showed a marked sense of apathy in providing firm leadership in 1915 and in 1916, remaining relatively reticent on the vital war-time issues confront-

⁹Grain Growers' Guide, August 19, 1914.

¹⁰Ibid., November 25, 1914.

ing the Ontario farmer. Unlike the U.F.O. the Prairie farm movements, energetic and well organized, vigorously articulated the aspirations of the prairie farmer.¹¹

At the annual convention of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association held in Brandon in January 1915 president R.C. Henders, addressing the caucus, voiced the farmers' attitude to the war. He professed that although it was a ghastly conflict in which countless innocent lives were being sacrificed, it was unfortunately the "inevitable price of freedom." He went on in his speech to translate the war in Canadian terms:

It is not only a struggle for the maintenance of our freedom, but it is our most emphatic protest against the most diabolical system of organized militancy the world has ever seen.¹²

Since the war was seen as a contest between democracy and autocracy, it was purported that "the spirit of the Divine" stood behind the forces of virtue and that the outcome of the struggle in favor of democracy was not in doubt. A pledge of unequivocal support was given to the federal government in its efforts to wage war against a "hellish power."

We desire in this, the first farmers' parliament, assembled since the outbreak of war, to assure our government and the government of Great Britain, that the agricultur-
alists of the empire will be found in their

¹¹The U.F.O. like its precursors espoused the abolition of the protective tariff and the promotion of reciprocity with the United States as the main planks of its platform, ignoring the more germane and indigenous question of rural depopulation in the province. Division among Ontario farmers on the tariff issue along with the U.F.O.'s inability to articulate the fears resulting from rural depopulation hindered the growth of the organization in the early stages of the war. The membership of the U.F.O. for the years 1914, 1915 and 1917 was respectively 2,000, 5,000 and 10,000. op.cit. Trowbridge. 64-65.

¹²Grain Growers' Guide, January 20, 1915. President's address at the Annual Convention of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association.

wanted places, and will be prepared to contribute their full share of men and money in order that the results of this war shall be a triumph of the principles which we so highly prize.¹³

Henders hoped that the end of the war would mark the end of all wars. Pacifism in the farmer did not perish but was restrained in order that real peace might be achieved by the sword. In the same breath, the president of the Grain Growers of Manitoba warned the farmers not to succumb totally to patriotism so as to become blind to their own economic interests. As in the past the main issue of domestic protest was the protective tariff. Henders denounced it as "a prolific producer of trust, combines and mergers by which the cost of living has been greatly enhanced, without any compensating advantage to the public."¹⁴

Later in the month of January 1915 the powerful United Farmers of Alberta also met in annual convention and articulated a less categorical but equally patriotic attitude towards the war:

We, the representatives of the United Farmers of Alberta, assembled in our annual convention, desirous to do all in our power to help our country and to give relief to the sufferers in the present war, especially to the people of Belgium . . .¹⁵

The U.F.A., like its sister organizations in Western Canada, expressed its longing for a durable peace which should be contracted at the end of the conflict through co-operation and not through the humiliating defeat of the enemy.

¹³Ibid., January 20, 1915.

¹⁴Ibid., January 20, 1915.

¹⁵United Farmers of Alberta Convention Proceedings, Grain Growers' Guide, January 27, 1915.

In 1916, although the Parliament of Canada had been discredited by the numerous scandals connected with war contracts, the U.F.A. and the Grain Growers' Association continued to strenuously endorse the Government's conduct of the war. J.A. Maharg, President of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, reaffirmed the need for Canadian participation:

While mistakes have been made in England as well in Canada, yet the greatest mistake of all would have been to have not entered the war.¹⁶

2. Domestic Discontent And Independent Politics

In Western Canada the farmer at the outbreak of war had begun to flex his political muscles in the advent of being granted additional representative power in the nation's parliament. This new realization along with the Government's bungling and shady conduct spurred the Western farmer towards political alienation and eventually to the brink of independent political action. It must be stressed that the farmer's disillusionment sprouted from domestic and not from foreign issues related to Canadian involvement in the war. The questions of tariffs, transportation, loans and graft precipitated political dissatisfaction in the minds of the farmers. On the issue of war and the extent of Canadian participation there was only unanimity and concurrence with Government policies.

In 1915, when the Canadian public discovered that Parliament Hill reeked with the stench of profiteering, graft and nepotism in the allocations of war contracts and in the manufacture of war supplies, the

¹⁶ Grain Growers' Guide, February 23, 1916. "Maharg's Presidential Address." Delivered at the opening of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association.

Prairie farmer's disenchantment with the traditional party system was pushed to the point of disgust. Alluding to the "carnival of graft" being staged on Parliament Hill which involved boot manufacturers, hospital and medical supplies, purchase of horses, field glasses, ammunition and rifles, the Guide remarked:

The penitentiary is altogether too good a place for men who will take advantage of their country's hour of necessity to line their own pockets at the expense of the lives and comfort of our soldiers at the front. In wartime traitors are shot. This is wartime, and if such graft does not constitute traitorous action, then it is something far worse.¹⁷

The Guide's indictment extended beyond the political parties.

It was stated that the individual voter was as much a culprit as the politician because of his lethargy. A campaign of political purity involving the elimination for partisan politics and the endorsement of strong, intelligent, and incorruptible political candidates was urged upon Canadians.¹⁸ The farmer had begun in 1915 to set a course along the road leading to independent farm politics. In a lengthy editorial the Guide expounded the position of the Western farmer, denouncing the traditional two-party political system and suggesting independent action:

For some years it has been becoming more and more apparent that there is no fundamental difference in policy between the Liberal and Conservative parties, and today it may be said that the distinction between them has entirely disappeared. They have now become two factions of one party, each faction striving by fair means or foul to secure control of the Government, and the "spoils" and "honors" which that control places in their hands. Neither party is animated by an honest desire to improve conditions, and neither party has made any honest effort to

¹⁷Ibid., April 7, 1915.

¹⁸Ibid., March 31, 1915.

curb the rapacity of the privileged interests. Both parties when in power have, in utter disregard of the public welfare, given the railways, bankers, manufacturers and other privileged interests practically everything they have asked for, and with the happy exception of the Reciprocity Agreement, have absolutely ignored the demands of the farmers of Canada for relief from the burdens they are carrying. Each party accuses the other of corruption, graft and dishonesty, and we believe that both of them are right in their accusations. It is about time that these two old parties were united into one as the Party of Special Privilege, and that the nauseating spectacle of mud-slinging politics should be brought to an end. It is absolutely hopeless for the farmers of Canada to expect any relief or redress by electing members of Parliament who will march under the banners of the two old Special Privilege parties. It is time for independent action.¹⁹

Although Western farmers showed keen interest in promoting independent political action, they were quite willing to place in abeyance their active participation in politics until the European struggle had been successfully terminated. The farmer encouraged the abrogation of political strife while the war lasted in order that "the best energies of Canada's public men be devoted to the prosecution of the war to a successful conclusion."²⁰ Since the life span of the incumbent parliament was to expire naturally in October 1916, an election seemed imminent in the closing months of 1915. A sense of deep aversion to the possibility of a war-time election dominated farm attitude: it would mean superfluous expenses when every dollar should be devoted to the war cause; it also would mean discord when national harmony was imperative; lastly an election would deflect invaluable public attention from the overriding question of

¹⁹Ibid., April 7, 1915.

²⁰Ibid., July 21, 1915.

war. Instead of a general election the farmer preferred a coalition Government whilst the war continued.²¹

In 1916 the Prairie farmer continued to think along independent political lines to obtain deserved attention for their economic problems. In the 1916 Annual Convention of the Manitoba Grain Growers, R.C. Henders urged the agriculturalist community to develop "the spirit of class consciousness," emphasizing the need not only to formulate principles but to implement them as well. It was pointed out that farmers in the past divided their political allegiance along party lines instead of along class interest unlike the business caste that understood politics as business and as a means to promote their collective welfare.²² In the course of the convention a resolution advocating independent political action based on a free trade policy was unanimously approved by the caucus.

By the end of 1916, although the Western farmer was in no way enamored with the Borden Government, which had been labelled as "a government for party and not for the people", a government composed of weak and business-controlled individuals, the agriculturalist remained loyal to his conviction that a general election was most undesirable and that a change in government would bring no improvement. A Laurier Government would fare no better than the Borden administration:

. . . the fifteen years record of the late Laurier government was practically the same thing. Graft and corruption were dominant and the greater part of the pledges which the party made before elections were ruthlessly broken when in power. The Liberal party in power was liberal in name only and five years in opposition has not given any sign of improvement.²³

²¹Ibid., July 21, 1915; also October 6, 1915.

²²Ibid., January 12, 1916. President's Address at the Annual Convention of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association.

²³Ibid., October 4, 1916.

An accusing finger was directed at the Liberal party's deletion of reciprocity from its political platform during 1916 as an example of how the party would behave if handed the reins of power.²⁴ While the farmer abhorred the idea of a war-time election, he nevertheless made preparations in the eventuality of such an occurrence and for the post-war period.

In December 1916 a sizeable stride in the creation of an independent farmer's party was taken by agriculture when the Canadian Council of Agriculture,²⁵ inspired mainly by Western representation, adopted a farmer's platform in preparation for future farmer involvement in the political arena. As outlined in an introductory remark in the fifty-three page long platform, the movement, which ostensibly represented rural Canada or one half of Canada's population, was under-represented in

²⁴A political cartoon which appeared on December 13, 1916 in the Guide excellently portrays the farmer's indignation. The cartoon shows Borden and Laurier arduously working to keep "Canada's National Tower" from collapsing by employing external wooden beams of support. While Borden's bolsters are labelled patronage, loyalty, and protective tariff, Laurier's are labelled as protection and promise. Also part of the cartoon, a farmer reveals a depiction of how integrally strong the Canadian National Tower will be under the aegis of the Farmer's Platform.

²⁵The Canadian Council of Agriculture was comprised of the executive officials from the following Canadian farm organizations: the United Farmers of Alberta, the Alberta Co-operative Elevator Co., the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Co., the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, the Manitoba Grain Growers' Grain Co., the Grain Growers' Guide, the United Farmers of Ontario and the United Farmers' Co-operative Co. of Ontario. The member population of the council numbered approximately 65,000. Canadian Council of Agriculture, The Farmers' Platform. Grain Growers' Guide. Winnipeg, 1917. 1.

the nation's parliament which had become insensitive to the farmer's needs;

It is becoming more apparent each year that our parliament is becoming more and more under the direct influence of industrial and financial centers, and if the rural population and the common people, including industrial wage earners, are to have their view represented in parliament, a democratic system of nominating and electing representatives must be adopted.²⁶

The farmer's platform, along with its demand for a more democratic form of government, dealt primarily with the disturbing issue of tariffs which, it was believed, directly fostered combines and trusts to the grave disadvantage of the common people, "shamefully" exploiting them by the elimination of competition. The farmers' political manifesto also contended that since agriculture was the basic industry of the nation, upon which all other industries relied, it was a catastrophic event when agriculture was in the doldrums. The platform complained bitterly about the almost stagnant condition of agriculture prevailing throughout the country at the time, triggered by the increased cost of agricultural implements and ancillary commodities connected with farm life. Statistical data was copiously marshalled to bolster this latter contention.

It was shown in the Farmers' Platform that the consumer was over-burdened by the crushing weight of the tariff, paying at average a sum of more than one third of the cost of whatever he purchased as a result of tariffs imposed on many of the necessities of life.²⁷ To remedy

²⁶Ibid., 1.

²⁷To merely cite a few examples provided by the Farmers' Platform, building materials such as lumber and paints were respectively taxed $32\frac{1}{2}\%$ and $37\frac{1}{2}\%$; household goods as a stove was taxed $32\frac{1}{2}\%$; clothing, home furnishings and farm implements were taxed on par with these latter goods or at a greater level. Farmers' Platform, 17-19.

this exploitative and harmful situation the Council proposed the following measures in tariff revision: reduction of customs duty on goods imported from Great Britain until free trade was achieved between Canada and Britain; implementation of the Reciprocity Agreement of 1911 with the United States and the placement of all food stuff not included in the treaty on a free list; abrogation of all tariffs on agricultural implements, farm machinery, vehicles, fertilizers, coal, lumber, cement, illuminating fuel and lubricating oils; substantial reduction of tariffs on all the necessities of life. Since the drastic overhauling of tariff policies suggested that the following measures be adopted: a direct tax on unimproved land values, a sharply graduated personal income tax, a heavy graduated inheritance tax on large estates, and a graduated income tax on the profits of corporations.²⁸ At the same time, to eliminate "waste and duplication," the nationalization of all railways, telegraph and express companies and government control of natural resources should be immediately undertaken.²⁹

The non-fiscal aspect of the platform dealt with legislative measures which were designed to democratize the process of politics and to bring the government closer to the people. Among the reforms included in this latter category were the following: the extension of the federal franchise to women, the granting of full provincial autonomy in liquor legislation and the adoption of the initiative, referendum and recall.³⁰

Once the Farmers' Platform had been drawn up by a national

²⁸Ibid., 4.

²⁹Ibid., 46.

³⁰Ibid., 50-53.

convention of three thousand delegates, it was referred to two thousand local unions or associations from which it received unanimous ratification. Until the second week of October 1917 the Prairie farmer moved steadily toward independent class politics, regarding the Farmers' Platform as the basis of the formation of an independent party should the Liberals and Conservatives fail to bring about a National Government sympathetic to the exigencies of the common people and dedicated to the successful prosecution of the war. The farmer preferred to avert an election and delay his entry into politics in order to maintain the maximum degree of national harmony while the nation indefatigably fought for democracy, freedom, and national honor. Finally with the formation of Union Government in October 1917 the farmers relegated their ideas of independent politics into the background and joined hands with the new national government to become a most influential force in the sweeping victory of Western Canada by Union Government in 1917.

3. An Expanding Economy, Shortage Of Manpower, And Conscription

While the coming of war was viewed with horror and regret by the Canadian farmer, he nevertheless foresaw the economic advantages that would accrue from the global conflagration. It was anticipated that war would create insatiable demands for foodstuffs and military hardware thus invigorating a flagging economy. In the West the farmer expected the price of wheat to rise as the European demand became greater³¹ and in Ontario the farm newspapers predicted that the war would remedy the

³¹Grain Growers' Guide, November 25, 1914.

"Rural Problem" in the province. Representatives of rural Ontario reasoned carefully that war would cause food prices to rise and would consequently enable farmers to pay higher wages which would beckon in turn city dwellers from industrial enterprises to farming.³²

The war served as an economic catalyst for both the industrial and agricultural communities. In 1915 the farmers expanded the cultivation of land for all types of crops. For instance, in Ontario the farmers had planted in 1914 727,400 acres in fall wheat, whereas in 1915 they increased the planted acreage to 811,185. Comparable expansion can be shown in the planting of spring wheat, barley, oats, rye, potatoes and corn:

	1914	1915
	ACRES	ACRES
Spring wheat	107,000	162,142
Barley	461,000	552,318
Oats	2,840,000	2,871,755
Rye	78,000	173,736
Potatoes	154,000	173,934
Corn	239,000	309,773 ³³

This burgeoning effect on agriculture was even more pronounced in Western Canada. The almost unrestrained expansion of agriculture continued until 1916 when manpower became scarce. By 1916 the enlistment of over 400,000 men in the C.E.F. and the ever increasing demands of war industries³⁴ resulted in a critical shortage of manpower. The farmer, the manufacturer and the Government found themselves in vicious competition for manpower.

At the end of 1916 manpower shortage reached crisis proportions. The flow of voluntary recruits had slowed to a trickle, and both the agriculturalist and the manufacturer were clamoring for additional manpower to

³²Trowbridge, op.cit. 51.

³³Hopkins, op.cit. Canadian Annual Review, 1914 and 1915 respectively pages 464 and 540.

³⁴People employed in the Canadian manufacturing industry increased from 514,883 in 1915 to 693,071 in 1917.

maintain production at a high level. In confronting this crucial problem the Government had instituted during the summer of 1916 a National Service Board to undertake a census of the available manpower in the country. R.B. Bennett, the director of the board, explained national registration as a vehicle to help determine government policies in the avowed purpose of "enabling the agricultural and other essential industries to be maintained at the highest state of efficiency without impairing the public services of the country."³⁵

Ontario farmers supported national registration in the hope that it would provide additional manpower for their industry. In Western Canada the farmer also endorsed registration but was pessimistic about its intended function:

. . . We can hardly see how the census can produce the results expected. A very decided handicap to the success of the National Service campaign is the fact that our government in Ottawa is still conducted on party lines.³⁶

Furthermore, it was purported that a manpower census of the country should be accompanied by a wealth census of the nation. Unlike some faction of the labor movement in Canada the farmers did not regard registration as a first step to conscription. Conscription was anathema to the farmers in 1915 because it would infringe upon individual liberty and partly because it was unfeasible to coerce a large percentage of non-British Canadians to bear arms.³⁷ At the time when recruiting was brisk it was thought that Canada could win the war with voluntary troops. In 1917 when recruiting came to a virtual standstill the issue of conscription emerged as the

³⁵Ibid., 1916. 328.

³⁶Grain Growers' Guide, December 27, 1916.

³⁷Ibid., September 8, 1915.

foremost topic of conversation in Canadian life. The dilemma confronting Canadians throughout 1917 was whether Canadians should draw a line limiting their military participation in the conflict and consequently play a smaller role in the war, or whether they should continue to escalate Canadian involvement and thus insure the vigorous maintenance of Canadian military presence in the war. It eventually proved to be a more agonizing question for the farmer than for the urbanite. The underlying factor which was to determine the response of Western Canada to conscription is found in the farmers' understanding of what the war represented:

Our honor, our very soul as well as the national liberty is at stake, and we could not stay out of it except at the loss of these . . . we must be prepared to put into this war both men and money until we see the triumph of the principles which we so highly prize.³⁸

In the third week of May 1917 Sir Robert Borden introduced the Military Service Bill in the House of Commons. The proposed legislation was said to have been designed to overcome both the recruiting problem and the shortage of manpower for the home front. The Act also provided broad and vague grounds for exemptions to be decided in specific cases by local exemption tribunals. In Ontario, the Weekly Sun, a traditionally pacifist, anti-militarist farm newspaper, led a small contingent of farm opinion in vehement opposition to the idea of conscription. The U.F.O., atuned to the pro-conscriptionist policy of the National Council of Agriculture, set forth its position in the following resolution:

³⁸Ibid., January 10, 1917. Presidential Address at the Manitoba's Grain Growers' Convention, January 1917.

Since human life is more valuable than gold, this convention most solemnly protests against any proposal looking to the conscription of men for battle while leaving wealth exempt from the same measure of enforced service. It is a manifest and glaring injustice that Canadian mothers should be compelled to surrender boys around whom their dearest hopes in life are centered, while plutocrats, fattening on special privileges and war business, are left in undisturbed possession of their riches.³⁹

A student of farm opinion during World War I has commented on the response of the agricultural communities in that province:

Most of the province's farmers were not opposed to the principle of conscription, but did, however, object to the conscription of farmers' sons and farm help. The manpower crisis in Ontario farms, rural depopulation and the loss of young men to the cities, towns and the C.E.F. were the main reasons for their opposition to the drafting of young farmers.⁴⁰

The high level of recruiting⁴¹ and the wave of migration⁴² to urban centres

³⁹Hopkins, op.cit. 1917. 383.

⁴⁰Trowbridge, op.cit. 91.

⁴¹Although it is most difficult to ascertain to any accurate degree the total farm enlistments during the war, Sir Edward Kemp, Minister of Militia, approximated that up to June 30, 1917 some 46,000 farmers from Canada had voluntarily joined the C.E.F., representing about ten per cent of all enlistments. (Hansard, August 20, 1917. 4685) According to figures issued by the Special Committee on the co-ordination of Recruiting and Production in July 1916 only 14,200 farmers had joined the C.E.F. prior to February 15, 1916, a mere 5.4 per cent of total enlistments at the time. It would seem that in 1916, when recruiting was at its height totalling 178,000 men for that year, the farmers joined en masse as compared to the previous years 1914-1915. Furthermore, it must be remembered that an unknown number of farm recruits registered with town or city batalions.

⁴²In 1918 it was estimated by J.J. Morrison, Secretary of the U.F.O. that the population of Ontario had decreased by some 37,363 people during 1916-1918 while the urban population had been augmented by 35,288 people during the same period. op.cit. Hopkins. 1919. 399.

indisputably affected the efficiency and total production of the Ontario agricultural community in 1916 and 1917. Whereas in 1915 the total yield of both fall and spring wheat amounted to 30,252,000 bushels in 1916 and 1917 it declined to 17,931,000 and 16,319,300 bushels respectively. This trend was indicative of all crops harvested in Ontario during 1916-1917.⁴³ A correlation between a higher degree of farm enlistments and lower production was apparent. The lower production experienced in Ontario was not evidenced in Western Canada during 1916-1917; instead production figures steadily rose and in some cases reached unprecedented heights.⁴⁴

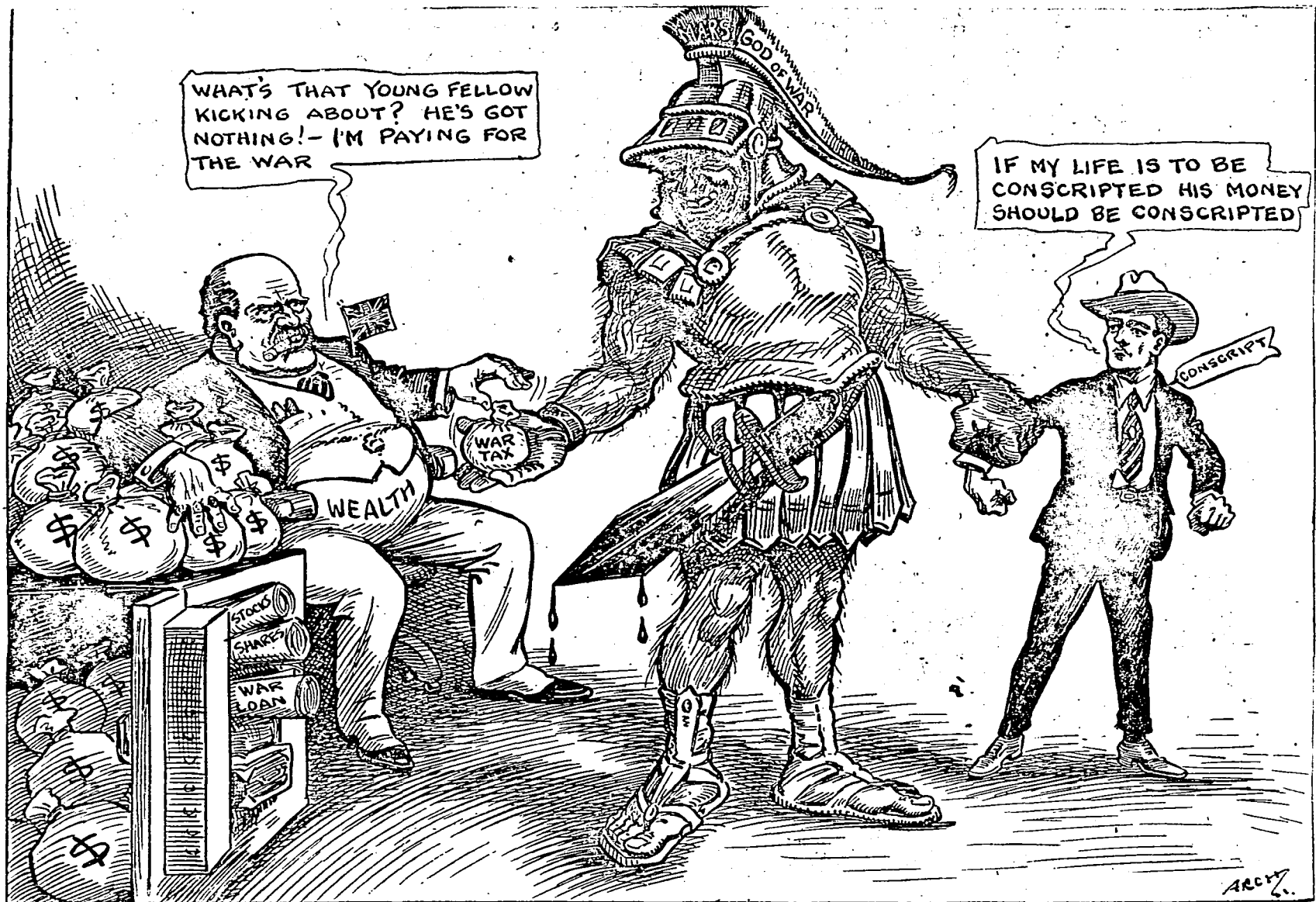
These production figures explain in part the semi-reluctant attitude of Ontario farmers to embrace conscription. They feared that their dwindling manpower supply would be further taxed until their way of life would be defaced and their productive role as farmers crippled. In contrast, with farm production continually rising in Western Canada, the Prairie farmer viewed conscription with less trepidation.

The idea of equality of sacrifice dominated the Prairie farmer's thinking on the subject of conscription.⁴⁵ The Western agriculturalist contended that since it was a "national" war every Canadian should be compelled to make an equal sacrifice. The Guide weighed carefully the Government's decision to enforce compulsory military service. It was not totally convinced that voluntarism had died, and was bitterly unsatisfied with the Government's intention to conscript manpower while

⁴³Canadian Dominion Bureau of Statistics, The Canada Year Book 1918. 174.

⁴⁴Ibid., 176.

⁴⁵Grain Growers' Guide, May 23, 1917. The Guide's position was couched in following terms: ". . . let the sacrifice of wealth be made in some measure approaching the sacrifice of our soldiers, and then, and not until then, is it just to demand conscription of men. Distribute the burden and let all bear our fair share."



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leaving wealth, as essential a factor as men in the waging of war, unconscribed. The Guide also felt that the Borden administration was incompetent to enforce such a drastic measure; only a truly National Government could possibly succeed in such a task after consulting the nation by means of a referendum.⁴⁶ All efforts to bring about a coalition government during the summer months of 1917 proved futile and the Prairie farmer became increasingly disgruntled over the political muddle created by partisan politicians.

During the first week of August 1917 a convention of eight hundred Western Liberals was held in Winnipeg to iron out some of the nettlesome problems besetting their slowly crumbling organization. At the outset of the convention a resolution committee of one hundred members was appointed to select all resolutions that were to be brought before the Liberal caucus. Two coteries struggled to gain control of the convention: on the one hand, a group headed by F.C. Wade, a Vancouver Liberal, and Hon. C.W. Cross, an Alberta provincial cabinet minister, categorically supported the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Laurier; on the other hand, a faction of Liberals, led by Clifford Sifton, attempted to influence the convention in the direction of open rebellion against its national leader. Much friction was experienced in the resolution committee in forging party policies as pertaining to conscription and to the endorsement of Laurier as party chieftain. On the latter question the convention unequivocally endorsed Laurier as leader; on the issue of conscription the convention remained slightly ambiguous, hinting at the possible

⁴⁶Ibid., May 30, 1917.

acceptance of conscription if the need arose. The resolution on conscription passed by the Western Liberal convention stated that

In times of peril the entire resources of the country, moral and material, manpower and wealth, are justly disposable by the state for the preservation of its national liberties.⁴⁷

Many of the other resolutions passed were directly connected with the Farmers' Platform: enforcement of national prohibition, reduction in the cost of farm machinery, agricultural credits, restraint of business monopolies, public ownership of railways, telegraphs and express systems, reduction of tariffs, re-organization of the banking system, and the formation of a National Government.⁴⁸

The Grain Growers' Guide commended the progressive spirit displayed by the Liberal convention on the domestic issues; however, it lamented the inability of the convention to rise above party politics on the momentous issue of war, compromising principles in order to win the support of both the pro- and anti-conscriptionists. Above all, the Guide denounced the convention for its servile attachment to Laurier:

Had the convention stopped at this point and declared for an independent Western party with no connection with the Eastern Liberal party there would have been little to regret. But the resolution expressing admiration of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the endorsement of his leadership destroyed the effect of all that went before. Sir Wilfrid Laurier is frankly opposed to conscription of men. He has made that very plain. Furthermore, a considerable element among his supporters in Quebec are opposed to further participation by Canada. By endorsing the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Laurier the convention cast

⁴⁷Ibid., Report of the Liberal Convention, August 15, 1917.

⁴⁸Ibid., August 15, 1917. 4.

grave suspicions upon its own sincerity in regard to the prosecution of the war. It indicated a keener desire to win the election than to win the war. Nor has the West much to hope from the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Laurier in securing the economic reforms which the convention endorsed.⁴⁹

The Guide concluded that the convention had rejected the opportunity to establish a Western party that could have allied itself with other elements in Parliament to bring the war to a successful termination; instead the Liberal caucus was over-ruled by the Liberal political machine intent upon dwarfing Canada's participation in the war.

When the Military Service Act became law in late August 1917 both the Prairie and Ontario farmer hopefully thought that the measure would not prove detrimental to their industry, understanding the Act to be aimed primarily at the urban areas and Quebec:

It is understood that they make provision for the exemption of men working in certain industries, including agriculture. It is a wise provision that the Conscription law will be applied so as not to still further reduce the number of men engaged in agriculture. The soldiers must be fed. The allied nations are working too close to the hunger line. Agriculture has been heavily drained of its men to supply the fighting forces.⁵⁰

Soon after the Military Service Act had been passed by Parliament, the Government legislated the War Time Election Act. The Guide agreed that the soldiers deserved special legislation giving them the right to vote; however, it took odds with the partial enfranchisement of women and the disfranchisement of the enemy alien:

⁴⁹Ibid., August 15, 1917.

⁵⁰Ibid., September 5, 1917.

The whole plan of the new franchise bill is undoubtedly to bring the Borden government back to power by disfranchising as far as possible those expected to vote against it, and by extending the franchise to those who are expected to support it.⁵¹

The bitterness and disillusionment of the Western farmer was exacerbated by the failure of politicians to form a National Government and by the new franchise act. The Guide saw no alternative but to resort to independent action:

The West will never receive a square deal from either of the two old parties as at presently constituted. The best hope is that out of the present crisis may be developed a Western party that will give its full support in the prosecution of the war to a successful conclusion and will at the same time be in a position to see that the welfare of the West is not ignored.⁵²

Although the Guide sympathized with Sir Robert Borden who had tried to create a coalition government, it detested the partisan attitude adopted by the rank and file of the Grit and Tory parties. Late in September 1917 when negotiations between Western Liberal delegates and the Prime Minister were clandestinely being conducted, the Prairie farmer had lost hope in the formation of a National Government and had begun to make preparations for an independent Western party.

In the first week of October, after Parliament had been prorogued and prior to the formation of Union Government, the farmer candidates who intended to contest the coming election in Western Canada issued their party's manifesto. The party's ideological stance was based upon the Farmers' Platform. In the opening paragraph of the election

⁵¹Ibid., September 12, 1917.

⁵²Ibid., September 19, 1917.

manifesto the farm candidates re-affirmed their devotion to the vigorous prosecution of the war by Canada:

The Grain Growers' Association since the earliest period of the war has steadfastly recognized the urgency of the call for the fullest support both in men and material resources which Canada can render to the great cause. Canada must regard herself not merely as a supporter of the Empire and the Allies, but as a principal, defending that which is essentially her own interest. In support of their position, grain growers have been ready at every stage both in men and dollar to do their part, and today are at least as fully represented in the fighting line as any other class of our population.⁵³

It was stated that the farmers could no longer support the present party coalition⁵⁴ because it lacked non-partisanship and national endorsement and because it was dictated to by the special interests. Lastly, the new party insisted that universal conscription of manhood be accompanied simultaneously by universal conscription of wealth.⁵⁵

4. Farm Acceptance Of Union Government

On 12 October the news of the formation of a Union Government reached Western Canada, and the farmer, judging that its composition reflected not only national opinion but also the spirit of Western Canada,

⁵³Grain Growers' Guide, Stand of Farmers' Candidates, October 10, 1917.

⁵⁴At the time of the issuance of the farmers' manifesto only two Liberals had joined the projected coalition government: Hugh Guthrie, as Solicitor General, and Col. C.C. Ballantyne as Minister of Public Works.

⁵⁵The manifesto had been signed by the following farm candidates: J.A. Mahary, President of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, R.C. Henders, President of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, J.S. Wood, Vice-President of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, R. Mackenzie, Secretary of the Canadian Council of Agriculture and Thomas Beveridge, P. Proudfoot and W.J. Ford.

immediately joined its ranks. Western Canada was flattered and impressed by the political representation given to its region. Premier Sifton of Alberta, Hon. J.A. Calder of Saskatchewan, and T.A. Crerar, President of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Grain Company since 1907 were all given prominent positions in the Unionist cabinet. Thomas A. Crerar, a most esteemed exponent of farm opinion in Manitoba and in Western Canada, was appointed to the important post of Minister of Agriculture. In the eyes of the Prairie farmers these Western men gave the new government an appearance of a regenerated and reformativ administration. Acceptance of Union Government by the Guide was instantaneous:

The new government is full of promise. The only wise patriotic thing to do now for every citizen is to judge them entirely on their records henceforth, and not by the past.⁵⁶

In the election campaign that was to follow the Western farmer vigorously upheld the banner of Union Government.

Once Union Government was formed, the Guide immediately took steps to justify and commend the existence of the new government in preparation for the general election; however, it warned the Prairie farmer not to support candidates who had no other policies to offer than the "win-the war" slogan. It argued that candidates imbued with the spirit of Western Canada were needed because the war would not last forever and in the post-war period such a breed of men would be able to resume the farmer's struggle for economic justice.

On 12 October Sir Robert Borden released the new government's election manifesto.⁵⁷ Although it was not as progressive and radical as

⁵⁶Grain Growers' Guide, October 17, 1917.

⁵⁷Refer to Appendix for complete text of Borden's manifesto.

the Guide would have preferred it to be, the manifesto was lauded as a document which promised "considerable improvement." Words of praise were directed particularly to those segments of the manifesto which promised civil service reforms and the abolishment of patronage, the extension of the franchise to women, the increase of taxation on war profits and on incomes, and government encouragement of agricultural co-operative organizations.⁵⁸ It was professed that the calibre of men dominating the government would assure the implementation of the program which was aimed in the direction of the Farmers' Platform. To demonstrate their good faith in the Government, the Prairie farm organizations came out in favor of a political truce on the tariff question:

. . . the organized grain growers are not the type of citizens to waste the strength and the resources of the nation by internal strife when the enemy is literally pounding at the gates. We believe that the grain growers are willing to accept any reasonable terms for a cessation of internal political struggles until the enemy is forced to surrender.⁵⁹

In answer to those few critics who disapproved of the Guide's reversal in its policy of strenuously condemning the corrupt Borden administration, the editor stated that the old Borden Government had passed away with the emergence of the Union Government which was composed of prominent individuals from both federal parties and from various walks of life. Not to support Union Government meant playing the party politics game, and was tantamount to deserting the men at the front and allowing Canada to be invaded by a ruthless foe:

⁵⁸Grain Growers' Guide, October 24, 1917.

⁵⁹Ibid., October 31, 1917.

. . . the big issue in the election is the honor and safety of Canada. If the Allies are defeated the Iron Heel of Germany will be felt in Canada. Our homes, our property and our women will receive the same treatment that was dealt out to Belgium and Serbia and northern France. Canada went into the war by the unanimous voice of parliament. To slink out of it now and leave our soldiers unsupported would be a national disgrace.⁶⁰

After the Military Service Bill had been passed by the Canadian parliament, murmurs of discontent were heard from the Ontario agricultural community. Farmers were antagonized not by the principle of conscription but by the dread of indiscriminate conscription. The farmer feared that the acceleration of rural depopulation in Ontario would inevitably affect his capacity to produce to the detriment of the nation. A resolution passed on 19 November 1917 by the farmers of York and Peel county reveals the nature of farm malaise in Ontario as provoked by the adoption of conscription:

This meeting of members of the Farmers' Clubs of Downsview, Elia, Richview, Clairville and Edgeley, which represents all shades of political opinion, desires to emphasize the following facts:

- (1) That for years past, owing to constant rural depopulation, the problem of raising foodstuffs at reasonable prices, or even of raising them at all has been growing steadily.
- (2) That since the outbreak of the war and the enlistment of practically all hired and much other help, the same problem has reached more alarming proportions than is understood by the general public.

⁶⁰Ibid., November 7, 1917.

- (3) That, unless exemption from military service is quite generally granted to all bona fide farmers, who are now left on the farms of this country, the problems in question will resolve itself into a national and imperial calamity, inasmuch as we shall not only be unable to help feed our allies, but may have to confront hunger in our own land.
- (4) That we send forth this statement, not because we fear the peril of life and limb for ourselves, or the endangering of our calling. But, without any ulterior motive, we assert that we know whereof we speak, and the call of patriotism, if not of sheer humanity, leaves us no option to do otherwise.⁶¹

Hon. T.A. Crerar, Minister of Agriculture in the Union Government, immediately took steps to assuage farm discontent by announcing that the government's intention was not to conscript those farmers who would be of greater service to the nation as food producers. Finally on 25 November in Dundas, Ontario the Minister of Militia, General Sydney C. Newburn, issued an unqualified assurance to the farm community of Ontario:

Farmers' sons who are honestly engaged in the production of food will be exempt from military service and if I continue to be Minister of Militia, I will give you my word that if any farmers' son who are honestly engaged in farm work and in production of foodstuffs, if they are not exempted by the tribunals and are called for military service -- I will have them honorably discharged from the Canadian Expeditionary Force, provided that they go to the farm, because it is very important that we should increase our production of foodstuffs.⁶²

⁶¹The Canadian Countryman, November 24, 1917. op.cit. Trowbridge. 99.
⁶²Toronto Globe, November 26, 1917.

The reassuring statement by General Newburn silenced the voices of protest in Ontario. The government agreed with the farmer's contention that food was as important a commodity as armed men in the nation's struggle to win the war. Exemptions were granted only to those farmers who were totally indispensable in maintaining the level of efficient food production and not to farmers as a class. In Western Canada the agricultural community was also very much relieved by the clear-cut pronouncement made by Union Government.

While Laurierites scorned Newburn's pronouncement as political subterfuge, they took every measure to woo the farm vote. The Liberal farm program in 1917 embodied the main planks of the Farmers' Platform in the hope of steering the rural vote into the hands of the Liberal party.⁶³ Laurier's manifesto not only vowed to vigorously prosecute the war by a system of voluntary recruitment until the question of conscription was democratically settled by a referendum but it also offered the farmer the progressive agricultural reforms for which he had persistently petitioned in the past: the elimination of duties on agricultural implements and other farm essentials, the removal of the seven and half per cent war-tax imposed in 1915 on all except enemy countries and the five per cent war-tax imposed also in 1915 against British goods, and the reduction of the cost of living by creating government controlled food-producing factories and war munition plants. On the vital issue of conscription Laurier candidly expressed his displeasure with both the method of introduction and the nature of the Military Service Act. Farm opposition to Laurier in 1917 stemmed primarily from a rural bias in favor of conscrip-

⁶³Refer to Appendix 3 for complete text of manifesto.

tion. The Guide expressed the farmer's aversion to Laurier's anti-conscription program:

Sir Wilfrid Laurier has made perfectly clear his attitude towards the Conscription Act. . . . Voluntary enlistment in Canada produced a magnificent army which has won undying glory on the battlefields of France and Flanders. But voluntary enlistment in Canada has reached its limit. If our soldiers at the front are to have the support they need, it can only be through conscription. . . . The resources of every one of the allied countries will be taxed to their utmost to save our armies from defeat, and defeat for the Allies means German warships in the St. Lawrence and German rule in Canada. . . . With conscription of men must come conscription of wealth and resources. Profiteering must be brought to an end and there must be government control of industries necessary to produce food and war munitions. All this Sir Wilfrid Laurier promises in his manifesto, but Union Government has adopted the same program and we prefer to rely on its promises rather than on those of Sir Wilfrid.⁶⁴

In reference to Laurier's proposal to abolish the war tariff tax, the Western farmer pointed to the unfulfilled promises of earlier Laurier administrations and dismissed it just as another campaign lure. The farmer was prepared to call a truce on the tariff issue with Union Government during the war because "at the present moment there is something even more important than the tariff reductions, and that is to protect our country from the enemy which is thundering at our gates."⁶⁵

The Liberal election campaign in Ontario exhorted the farmer to be faithful to his class interest. One Liberal advertisement read:

⁶⁴Grain Growers' Guide, November 14, 1917.

⁶⁵Ibid., November 14, 1917.

Be Consistent. Stand By Your Own Platform.
Support The Men Who Pledge Themselves To
Work For Those Reforms For Which You Have
Asked. Vote For The Liberal Candidates.⁶⁶

In contrast, Unionist campaign literature focussed on patriotism. One advertisement printed in all farm areas of Ontario by the Citizens' Union Committee showed an incensed farmer angrily gesticulating and voicing the following indignation:

SLANDER.
That man is a slanderer
who says that
The Farmers of Ontario
will vote with
Bourassa Pro-Germans
Suppressors of Free Speech
and
Slackers
NEVER.⁶⁷

In Western Canada the rural voter was also given a clear-cut issue to support:

In this election campaign as in all others there are many who have no argument except misrepresentation and falsehood. They seek only to confuse the mind of the voter. There is only one big issue at stake. The campaign in Quebec is that Canada has done enough. The policy of Union government is that Canada is honor bound to remain in the war to the finish. If the Allies are defeated nothing else matters much. If Germany is victorious the iron heel will be placed upon Canada. Germany wants Canada as a part of German Empire. . . . It is no time to debate small things when the issue is life and death. The sacrifices of our soldiers must not be in vain. They must not be deserted in the hour of their greatest need. If Union government is returned to power Canada will be in the war to the end. If Union government is defeated Canada will do but little if any more to carry on the war in which she

⁶⁶The Farmers Magazine, December 1917. op.cit. Trowbridge. 103.

⁶⁷Toronto Globe, December 17, 1917; also, Farm and Dairy, December 13, 1917. op.cit. Trowbridge. 104.

has done so nobly to save mankind from
the power of German autocracy.⁶⁸

Although the election of 1917 like any other election contained numerous complicated economic, social and political issues, they were all placed in the background, permitting the emergence of only one real big polemical issue -- conscription. On 17 December 1917 rural voters in unprecedented numbers proceeded to the polls with this one question in mind.

5. The Farm Vote

The Canadian farmer contributed in great measure to the Unionist victory of 1917. The Prairie provinces, which were predominantly rural in sentiment and in structure,⁶⁹ overwhelmingly endorsed the policies of Union Government and rejected the Laurierite program. The electoral returns for the three Prairie provinces in 1917 showed that only 27.2 per cent of the eligible voters cast a ballot in favor of the Liberal party. This constituted a political revolution in terms of previous general elections. In 1908 the Liberal party had received 50.7 per cent of the popular vote and in the reciprocity election of 1911 it polled 52.5 per cent. In contrast, Union Government won the acclaim of 71.6 per cent of the Prairie electorate in 1917, while a mere 1.2 per cent of the Western electorate voted for a third party. Consequently in 1917 Union Government seized forty-one of the possible forty-three seats in the Prairie provinces, whereas in the 1911 election the Liberals had captured seventeen

⁶⁸Grain Growers' Guide, December 12, 1917.

⁶⁹The total population of the Prairie Provinces numbered 1,698,000. Of the latter figure 606,060 were classified as urban dwellers and 1,092,160 as rural residents.
1916 Prairies Census. XVI.

of the twenty-seven ridings in the West.

The only two constituencies that gave the Liberal party a mandate in the 1917 election were Victoria in Alberta and Provencher in Manitoba. The Liberal victory in the former constituency reflected the wider popular support bestowed upon Laurier in Alberta,⁷⁰ a province which had been nurtured from birth in 1905 on the tenets of Liberalism and where the spokesmen for Liberalism, like the Hon. Frank Oliver and the Edmonton Bulletin, still remained undaunted and influential. Nonetheless, the vote in Victoria was a hesitant one with barely fifty per cent of the civilian electorate voicing their support for Liberalism. In the constituency of Provencher where the French-Canadian community had a slight popular advantage over its British counterpart, the Liberal party emerged victorious with a small majority of 185 votes.⁷¹

With only a few exceptions the vast majority of Prairie constituencies voted heavily for Union Government. Of the forty-one constituencies seized by Union candidates only eight of them had failed to provide the comfortable margin of sixty per cent or more of the civilian vote.

The six Western farmer Unionist candidates who ran in 1917 were all given strong mandates by their constituencies: T.A. Crerar, President of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Grain Company, was elected in the constituency of Marquette, Manitoba by a majority of 6,500 votes representing the largest majority vote given to any candidate in rural Western Canada; R.C. Henders, President of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, was also strongly supported in the constituency of Macdonald, Manitoba compiling a majority in excess of 3,000 votes; J.A. Maharg, President of the

⁷⁰In Alberta the Liberal party received 35.5% of the popular vote as compared to Manitoba and Saskatchewan where it respectively polled 20.2% and 25.9%.

⁷¹The constituency housed a total population of 26,271 of which 5,112 was of British descent, 5,457 of French-Canadian origin and 5,515 of German-Austrian stock. The remaining population was of varied origins.

Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, was elected in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan without any opposition; John F. Reid, an erstwhile director and executive of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, emerged victorious in Mackenzie, Saskatchewan; Andrew Knox, director of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association was elected in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; and lastly, Robert Cruise, endorsed by the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association was elected by acclamation in Dauphin.

The Prairie farmer swelled with pride in the aftermath of the election, realizing that he had played a conspicuous role in the victory of Union Government. His devotion to Union Government during the election campaign had been governed by love of country and by his determination to see democracy and civilization triumph. The Guide summed up the Prairie farmer's sense of satisfaction in assisting Union Government to victory:

The voice of the West has always been strong on economic questions. Many people thought that the promise of free agricultural implements and tariff reduction and the referendum would loom so large in the minds of Western farmers that it would draw them away from the path of duty. But splendidly have they acquitted themselves of any suspicion of seeking personal benefit. They have declined all that might have appealed to their own pocket books. They scorned the path of ease and profit and have chosen rather the path of duty, of self-sacrifice, honor and self-respect. The issue was placed squarely before the Western people. There was no doubt in the minds of the electors. The Union Government was formed for one specific purpose and if returned to power was pledged to bring all the resources of the nation to the support of the Allies in the struggle for democracy and the safety of civilization.⁷²

⁷²Grain Growers' Guide, December 26, 1917.

The Western farmer unequivocally rejected Laurier in 1917 not because of his rather progressive domestic program but because of his anti-conscriptionist attitude. The farmer, although very much interested in the welfare and economic advancement of his own class, rallied behind Union Government first on the grounds of its war policies and second on the grounds that it would hopefully administer the business of the nation in a more progressive and equitable fashion than its predecessors.

In Ontario the rural support of Union Government demands more intensive study. Although there had occurred a marked decline in the percentage of rural population as compared to the urban population of Ontario during the ten years span of 1901-1911, the rural population still managed to maintain a strong popular hegemony over the electoral map of the province. The 1911 census reported that the rural population had declined from fifty-seven per cent of the total population of Ontario in 1901 to forty-seven per cent in 1911, whereas the urban population had increased from forty-three per cent of the total population in 1901 to fifty-three per cent in 1911.⁷³ Nonetheless, the electoral map in 1911 showed that the rural population dominated fifty-six of eighty-six constituencies in the province.⁷⁴ Although redistribution had subsequently

⁷³Canada, Fifth Census 1911.

	1911		1901	
	rural	urban	rural	urban
Ontario Population	1,194,785	1,328,489	1,246,969	935,978
	47%	53%	57%	43%

⁷⁴Ibid.,

lowered Ontario's representation to eighty-two seats by 1917, it is quite evident that the Ontario farmer had a most decisive voice in the election of 1917.

Of the eight seats won in Ontario by Laurier candidates six represented rurally dominated constituencies: two of the latter six were dominated by French-Canadian population -- Prescott and Russel; there were represented by conscriptionist Liberals -- Kent, Bruce South and Middlessex; and one contained a very strong admixture of French-Canadian and German-Canadian representation -- Renfrew South. In addition five of the six constituencies had been impregnable citadels of Liberalism in the past; however, the non-English influence appears to have been the determining factor in Laurier's limited success in Ontario in 1917. People voted along racial rather than class lines. Also, the double identity of some Liberals and the traditional loyalty of the constituencies in question assured Liberal triumphs in the latter six rurally dominated ridings.

A more acute analysis of Ontario electoral returns reveals that besides suffering defeat in seventy-four constituencies, the Liberal opposition only managed to obtain more than forty per cent of the civilian popular vote in twenty of the seventy-four ridings in which the Union Government had emerged victorious. Sixteen of the twenty constituencies had been identified as rurally dominated ridings by the census of 1911. Again the racial composition of the riding determined the degree of Liberal support. Four of the sixteen rural ridings which had rendered more than forty per cent of the civilian popular vote to Laurier contained a non-Anglo-Saxon population half the size or greater than half the size of the English-speaking community, while seven constituencies had a non-English population

of between one and two fifths the size of the Anglo-Saxon population, and five ridings had a non-English population of less than one fifth the magnitude of the English-speaking community.⁷⁵

The racial split between the Anglo-Saxon electorate and the French-Canadian and German-Canadian electorates was an outstanding feature in the electoral behaviour of the Ontario voting population in 1917. For instance, in the constituency of Algoma East, with a population of 44,628 of which 36,143 persons were considered rural residents, 11,571 were classified as French Canadian and 2,170 as German. The riding had voted Liberal in the reciprocity election of 1911, rendering the Liberal candidate a majority of 182 votes. In 1917, however, Algoma East sided with Union Government. The Unionist candidate won the electoral contest in the riding by a 316 vote majority, excluding the military vote which eventually hiked the margin victory to 1,146 votes. A closer study of the electoral returns for Algoma East divulges dramatically the racial cleavage that characterized the voting pattern of 1917. Those polling divisions in which the French-Canadian element predominated invariably went Liberal: in Blind River district where the French-Canadian and British populations totalled 1,622 and 813 respectively, the Liberal party tallied an impressive margin of 295 to 92 votes in its favor. This was not an isolated case but the general rule. In six other polling divisions in which the French-Canadian population exceeded that of the English-speaking by large numbers (Dowling, Merrit and Baldwin, John Island, Lumsden and Rayside, Clemsford, Balfour) the Liberal party received a large aggregate vote of 800 as compared to

⁷⁵Refer to Appendix 14

the paltry figure of 139 for the Unionist party. In sharp contrast, in those polling divisions where the Anglo-Saxon element prevailed the vote greatly favored the Unionist candidate.⁷⁶ It would not seem unfair to infer from such evidence that in Algoma East the Liberal party's ability to attract forty-eight per cent of the civilian vote and forty-two per cent of the combined civilian and military vote was due in large measure to the French-Canadian vote in the constituency and not to a rural protest vote.

Dundas, a rural constituency with 11,762 British Canadians, 1,339 French Canadians and 2,605 German Canadians reveals a similar but less dramatic division in the vote along racial lines. In one polling district, Williamsburg, dominated by a non-Anglo-Saxon electorate the Liberal party won by a majority of ninety-four votes. Since the remaining polling sectors in Dundas were Anglo-Saxon dominated it is more difficult to gauge the non-English vote; however, a definite pattern can be detected. The strength of the Union vote modulated with the size of the English-speaking vote: the smaller the non-English electorate, the greater the vote for Union Government. Forty-two per cent of the civilian electorate had voted Liberal in Dundas.⁷⁷

Similar voting behaviour can be seen in the rural constituency of Haldimand with an English-speaking population of 15,302, a French-Canadian population of 194 and a German-Canadian population of 4,477. Again where the non-English vote prevailed so did the Liberal party. About one quarter of the German population in the constituency was concentrated in

⁷⁶Refer to Appendix 15 for electoral break-down of Algoma East
⁷⁷Refer to Appendix 14

the polling district of Rainham with an Anglo-Saxon population of less than one half of its German counterpart. Consequently this non-English dominance was reflected in the electoral returns of the poll: the Liberal gained 372 votes, while the Unionist received 86 votes. The remaining half of the non-Anglo-Saxon population was dispersed into smaller clusters throughout the riding. Haldimand rendered the Laurier candidate forty-three per cent of the civilian vote and forty-one per cent of the combined military and civilian vote. An autopsy of all the rural ridings in Ontario that gave the Liberal party more than forty per cent of the popular vote discloses paralalled electoral responses to the federal election of 1917.

Some have argued that the rural constituencies of Ontario in 1917 returned to traditional politics or to "normalcy" in the wake of the Unionist pronouncement on farmer exemptions by "neither overwhelmingly supporting Borden nor rejecting Laurier."⁷⁸ This, of course, is far from the truth. In 1917 only 6 of the 52 rural constituencies in Ontario which were in large part either French Canadian in composition or were represented by conscriptionist Liberals gave political mandates to the Liberal party; whereas in 1911 twelve rural constituencies had voted Liberal. Furthermore in reference to those sixteen rural constituencies in which the Liberals polled between forty to fifty per cent of the popular vote in 1917 the following evidence may be added: (1) four of the sixteen rural constituencies had voted Liberal in 1911 (2) two of the sixteen constituencies had been traditional Liberal ridings until 1911 when they voted Conservative and then in 1917 increased their civilian support for the Union Government (3) seven of the sixteen ridings which had in the

⁷⁸op.cit. Trowbridge. 113.

past divided its support at election time, or had been strongly Conservative gave wider support to Union Government in 1917 (4) only three of sixteen constituencies showed diminished civilian support for Union Government as compared to the electoral support received by the Conservative party in 1911 (5) all of the sixteen constituencies, when the military vote was tabulated, demonstrated much greater electoral support for Union Government than the support they had rendered either party in 1911. Above all, thirty-six of the fifty-two rural constituencies in the province submitted an emphatic rejection of Laurier by offering less than forty per cent of the civilian support to the Liberal cause.

Needless to say, more than sixty per cent of the civilian English-speaking agricultural community in Ontario endorsed Union Government in 1917 not because Sir Robert Borden had promised military exemption to the farmer, for if it had wanted total exemption from military involvement in the conflict Laurier would have been the best political leader to support, but because Union Government represented an administration whose intentions and efforts were geared to escalating Canadian participation in the war. Like most English-speaking Canadians when the agriculturalist was confronted with the decision to either back away from further participation and tend to his own domestic problems, or to increase his involvement in the war and become, what he thought, a more respected and mature member of the international community he chose the latter in preference to the former.

CHAPTER VII

ORGANIZED LABOR, WAR AND INDEPENDENT POLITICS

1. Labor's Aversion To War

When war broke out in Europe at the end of July 1914, most English Canadians were willing to take up the sword if Britain should have been forced into the conflict by the violation of Belgium neutrality. On Tuesday 4 August war was officially declared. English Canadians responded with unbridled enthusiasm. Flag waving, singing, and parades characterized Canada's mood. The Montreal Star described the war mania permeating the city of Montreal:

The fever surged to the highest point yet attained last night. All the people were on the streets. The younger and more volatile marched for miles. . . The Windsor and the Ritz-Carlton hotels were taken by storm. . . Why it was done no one seemed to know.¹

Similar scenes of bedlam were re-enacted across the country from Halifax to Vancouver.²

On the whole, English Canadians were honored to be in a war avowed to noble ideals:

¹Montreal Star, August 4, 1914.

²J. Castell Hopkins, op.cit. 1914. 142-143.

At the bottom the war now involving all Europe and menacing the world is humanity's own life struggle, the struggle for freedom, for national integrity, for free citizenship in a free democracy of the Nations . . . Because it's the world's fight for freedom, Britain, reluctantly but resolutely speaks the word and Canada also answers ay.³

By the end of August Canada had recruited its quota of thirty-three thousand men to assist Britain, and by December 1914 they were dispatched to the war front.

Most labor leaders did not share the same enthusiasm and devotion to the war. The Industrial Banner speaking for the left wing of organized labor expressed its deep-seated aversion to the coming war:

The workers of the world are united in their detestation of all that pertain to war and enormous evils that follow in its trial . . .⁴

The Industrial Banner failed to see the conflict as an altruistic and democratic crusade, hoping all the while that the workers of the world would rise in protest to prevent bloodshed. If war should engulf the world, the Banner, using Marxist rhetoric, foresaw the apocalyptic collapse of capitalism:

. . . the workers of the world will unite and repudiate the obligations imposed upon them by their selfish rulers and presentime masters, and rend forever the chains that have so long enslaved them. Victory for the ruling class may under the present conditions be no longer possible, but afford the opportunity to the working class to unite for its own emancipation and the enthronement of humanity. It may be the hour foretold by Bellamy is about to strike.⁵

At the 1907 International Socialist Congress it was unanimously agreed by world labor leaders that, if the threat of war should

³Toronto Globe, August 4, 1914.

⁴Industrial Banner, August 7, 1914.

⁵Ibid., August 7, 1914.

appear, every effort should be mustered to prevent it. Accordingly, at the 1911 Calgary Convention, the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada⁶ adopted the policy of precipitating a general strike if war should come. However, war in August 1914 did not incite labor to strike on behalf of peace. In Britain, France, and Germany organized labor chose to raise the banner of patriotism rather than that of socialism. In Canada the labor movement simply concurred with the Government's decision to participate in the European conflagration. It did so without ebullience.

At the thirtieth annual convention of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, held at St. John, New Brunswick in September 1914, labor reiterated its "utter abhorrence of war," and professed "that those who make the quarrels among the ruling class of the world, should be allowed to do the fighting."⁷ It was further stated that the working class in one country could not single-handedly forestall war but that when "The working class in the other countries involved make a move to end this struggle, that we in Canada will co-operate in that move to end this terrible conflict, as speedily as possible."⁸

Although the TLC did not view the conflict as a holy crusade, it acknowledged that Britain was not the aggressor. The Congress extended a warm wish to Britain

⁶The TLC came into existence in 1886. Its parent had been the Canadian Labor Union formed in 1873 to fill the need for a national organization. Prior to 1902 it aspired to contain all unions; however, after this date, due to the expulsion of the Knights of Labor from its ranks, the TLC became predominantly the leader of international unions, affiliating closely with the American Federation of Labor. At the outbreak of war in 1914 the TLC was by far the largest Canadian labor organization, boasting an 80,094 membership in a country which had only 166,163 organized laborers.

⁷Trades and Labor Congress, Report of the Proceedings for the Thirtieth Annual Convention, 1914. 14.

⁸Ibid., 16.

that despotism in Europe will be hurled to its final destruction, to make way for constitutional freedom in all countries in Europe, in preparation for the last struggle of the working class to their own actual freedom.⁹

The TLC preferred the British system of Government to Germany's. The former was much less autocratic than the latter. Less impressed by the Canadian Government's generous efforts to succour the war cause, and more concerned with the plight of the toiler, the Banner remarked:

. . . war itself would be impossible but for the efforts of the vast and unappreciated army of toilers that perforce must feed and clothe and maintain the combatants in the field while all the music of the bands, the wild hurrahs of acclaiming multitudes, the eulogies from press, pulpit, and public forums are showered upon the marching regiments while the silent tragedy of the army of industry at its daily task is unnoticed, unheralded and unacclaimed.

Were the government of Canada but one-tenth as solicitous of the welfare of the army that keeps the wheels of commerce in motion, as it is now on that marching to the defence of the Empire, were it in times of peace, but to raise a small proportion of the money to be expended in this war and devote it to the betterment of the workers of the nation, Canada would be better, more prosperous and her people happier . . .¹⁰

The fraternal delegate of the American Federation of Labor, in his speech to the TLC caucus in the autumn of 1914 submitted his organization's policy vis-à-vis the war:

The American Federation of Labor is against war. . . . The burden of the battlefield falls upon those least able to withstand it. Wars are fought for aggrandizement rather than for humanity.¹¹

⁹Ibid., 16.

¹⁰Industrial Banner, August 21, 1914.

¹¹Trades and Labor Congress, 1914. op.cit., 92.

Since the AFL and TLC were closely affiliated organizations, it was of paramount importance that the two bodies not diverge radically upon important issues.

In his address to the Congress of 1914, Hon. T.W. Crothers, Minister of Labor, related that he was very proud to be a Canadian because the nation was united in the struggle "to maintain the honor, liberty, and integrity of the British Empire."¹² He urged labor to co-operate with capital in order that the country might devote its total energies to patriotic endeavours.

In the same month of September the Canadian Federation of Labor,¹³ a rival of the TLC and an exclusively national labor organization, met in Ottawa for its annual convention. The president of the Federation during the war years, Mr. C.G. Pepper declared that

As a body we abhor war . . . but it is not time to preach peace when the enemy is at our gate demanding the surrender of our honor, our country, our liberties, or the blood of our people. Let us play our part as true men, submitting to any sacrifice we may be called upon to make to uphold the honour of our flag.¹⁴

From the very beginning of the war the diminutive CFL was much more attuned to the general war mania gripping Anglo-Saxon Canadians than was the TLC.

¹²Ibid., 108.

¹³The CFL was created through the efforts of the Knights of Labor and dissenting national unions after the expulsion of the Knights of Labor in 1902 from the TLC. The CFL was thoroughly antagonistic to the main continental movement, aspiring to organize all national labor unions. In 1903 its membership totalled a mere 7,000, most of whom hailed from Quebec. The CFL's membership never exceeded the 20,000 mark. In 1927 the CFL merged with C.B.R.E. and O.B.U. to form the All-Canadian Congress of Labor. Finally, in 1956 it merged with the TLC to form the present-day Canadian Labor Congress.

¹⁴Canadian Federation of Labour, Proceedings of the Annual Convention of 1914. 5.

The most nettlesome problem confronting labor after the outbreak of war was how to protect and to promote the rights of trade unionism in the midst of a war-dominated economy and social milieu. President Watters pointed out to the delegates at the St. John's convention that the special session of Parliament had already legislated on behalf of finance and commerce, safeguarding their interests. Labor had received no such consideration. Labor was in a precarious position, and the Executive of the TLC had petitioned the Government in August for protection. In a letter addressed to Sir Robert Borden and his cabinet, labor's fears were sounded;

. . . one of the great questions we believe you should deal with is the protection of the interest of the working class. The Government has already taken steps to protect the financial interest of the Dominion of Canada. . . The Government is asked to save the homes of the people first. Foreclosures should be stopped right now by the Government. . . Surely there can be no sympathy with food manipulators bent on making huge profits at a time like this out of the unfortunate position of the people. . . So we suggest you immediately take steps to control the food supply, and prevent inflation of prices. . . Again the unemployment problem demands immediate attention. . . All the public work possible should be done. . . If the credit of the Government is good enough for the great financial institutions, it should be good enough to do business with the people in the interests of the people.¹⁵

The TLC Executive Council foreshadowed bleak conditions for the worker if immediate steps were not taken to curb unemployment and the soaring cost of living. More than ever the Labor Congress stressed the need for indus-

¹⁵Trades and Labor Congress of Canada. op.cit., 12-13.

trial and political solidarity -- a sine qua non to the successful promotion of Labor's cause. The TLC issued a brief manifesto against those forces in society that sought to cripple the labor movement in the perilous course of war:

There are those who think that this war will set back the forces of industrial freedom and political liberty of the working class. This may be in the nature of a thought father to a war. We believe such a wish is doomed to bitter disappointment. While this war was too soon, and brought on too quick for the co-operation of the workers to stop it at the outset, yet it is a long way too late to stop the onward march of the workers to the goal they have set.¹⁶

In 1915 the TLC sounded a seemingly more patriotic note on the war and Canada's involvement:

Under existing conditions it becomes the duty of the Labor world to lend every assistance possible to the allies of Great Britain and for us in Canada, more especially to the Empire of which we form part, in a mighty endeavor to secure early and final victory for the cause of freedom and democracy.¹⁷

Although the TLC verbally supported the war, it was not prepared to fight until the last drop of Canadian blood was sacrificed on the field of battle to crush the enemy. A negotiated peace was palatable to the hierarchy of labor. To succumb to patriotism to the detriment of labor's fight for economic justice was anathema to the TLC:

. . . there is scarcely any need of urging the imperative duty of continuing, without cessation or interruption along the lines followed during the past few years in the perfecting of organization, in vigilance on all sides, in careful supervision over all legislative movements and, finally in keeping alive the flame of ardor in the breasts

¹⁶Ibid., 15.

¹⁷Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, Report of the proceedings for the annual convention 1915. 14.

of those who labor for the cause of labor.
Let us repeat: This is not a time for words,
but is the hour for action -- careful study,
well-pondered consideration, eternal watch-
fulness, and unremitting activity must be the
order of the day.¹⁸

If war was to be supported it should not retard the progress of the Trades
and Labor Congress.

The Canadian Federation of Labor was more intimately allied
to the nation's war effort, less militant in the cause of labor and more
subservient to Canadian military participation. The president of the
Federation candidly confessed in 1915 that

we have not made any special effort to
establish new unions, as we realized that
the thoughts of the people just now are
centred on the great war going on in Europe,
and in which we Canadians are personally
involved.¹⁹

The Federation encouraged enlistment, while discouraging union activity:

. . . we should do our utmost to support
our Empire in restoring in Europe such a
peace as the Kaiser will never again dare
disturb. We can do this not only by en-
listing for overseas service, but also by
seeking to avoid all possibility of trouble
between our members and their employers,
especially such as would hamper in any way
the success of our troops now fighting our
battles.²⁰

To the CFL war took precedence over the workers' needs. This attitude was
no better enunciated than by the President of the Provincial Workmen's
Association, an important Maritime affiliate of the CFL:

. . . everything is secondary to the great
question of war and victory for Great Britain
and her brave allies.²¹

¹⁸Ibid., 15.

¹⁹Canadian Federation of Labor, Proceedings of the annual convention of 1915.

²⁰Ibid., 15.

²¹Ibid., 15.

There existed a pronounced dichotomy of purpose in the two rival labor organizations. For the TLC the laborer's exigencies and organization superceded the need for patriotism; for the CFL the reverse was true. The latter actively promoted the war; the former nonchalantly remained a neutral agent, awaiting the social benefits and power that would emanate from the conflict. The Industrial Banner spoke for the radicals:

One thing of all seems clear, the working class will emerge from this titanic holocaust with added power and prestige and for the first time in the history will grasp the reigns of authority, and constitute themselves the ruling class.²²

2. Improving Conditions And Industrial Unrest

1916 witnessed the end of the business depression that had plagued Canadian society since 1913. Employment became plentiful; several factors were responsible for this: (1) the military recruitment of some 250,000 men by February 1916 diminished the reserve manpower supply²³ (2) the development of new war production facilities gave employment to thousands (3) the steep decline of immigration injected few workers into the economy²⁴ (4) the concentrated efforts of municipal, provincial and

²²Industrial Banner, December 31, 1915.

²³Enlistment figures up to February 1916:

Native-born Canadians	73,935	30%
British-born in U.K.	156,637	62%
Others	18,899	8%
	249,471	100%

²⁴J.C. Hopkins, The Canadian Annual Review. 1915. 219.
Whereas in 1914, 384,878 immigrants entered Canada, in 1915 only 144,789 immigrants were admitted, in 1916, 48,537 and in 1917, 75,374.

federal authorities created employment by undertaking many public work projects. Ostensibly the Canadian economy had been resuscitated by the continuation of war.

By the end of 1916 Canada was no longer a debtor but a creditor nation.²⁵ Both home consumption and exports increased beyond expectation. For the year 1916 total imports for home consumption amounted to \$507,817,159 as compared with \$455,446,312 for the previous year. Similarly but to a greater extent for the same period, the total value of exports in 1916 was \$779,300,070 as compared with \$461,442,509 in 1915. The balance of trade was in Canada's favor.²⁶

During the year there was a slight shortage of labor because of increasing recruitment, declining immigration,²⁷ and the burgeoning demands for war materials and supplies. Attempts to overcome the shortage of manpower saw the dilution of the labor force with "womanpower", and the curtailment of public works. While employment was easily accessible, the cost of living continued to spiral. A simplified index of the cost per week of staple foods, fuel and lighting, and rent for the period 1914-1917 will clearly show the leaps that the cost of living took during the war:²⁸

	1914 Jan.	1914 Oct.	1915 Jan.	1915 Oct.
All Foods	7.729	7.993	7.967	7.815
Fuel & Lighting	1.901	1.899	1.895	1.828
Rent	4.830	4.545	4.370	3.980
Grand Total	14.493	14.469	14.265	13.660

²⁵W.L. Edmonds, "The Biggest Year in Canada." Canada Magazine, Toronto, March 1917.

²⁶Canadian Dominion Bureau of Statistics, The Canada Year Book. 1918. 290-293.

²⁷Refer to Appendix 23 for immigration figures.

²⁸Labor Gazette, January 1918. Department of Labor.

	1916 Jan.	1916 Oct.	1917 Jan.	1917 Oct.	1917 Dec.
All Foods	8.282	9.275	10.272	11.805	12.244
Fuel & Lighting	1.854	1.963	2.134	2.503	2.639
Rent	<u>3.975</u>	<u>4.083</u>	<u>4.025</u>	<u>4.470</u>	<u>4.450</u>
Grand Total	14.143	15.476	16.464	18.822	19.378

The rise in the cost of living should be placed in direct comparison with the meager wages the workers received -- an unskilled worker earned at best \$12 per week, a skilled man received an average salary of \$20 per week.²⁹ Few wage increases had been given to the workers since the outbreak of war. When pay hikes were issued they were often accompanied with reduction of working hours thus severely limiting the earning capacity of the laborer.

With better times appearing in 1916-1917, the worker grew increasingly discontented and rebellious. In 1915 there had been an insignificant number of industrial strikes, only 43 strikes during the entire year. In 1916 this number almost doubled to 75 strikes, and finally by 1917 it more than trebled to 148 industrial disputes.³⁰ These figures indicate that the worker had become more sensitive to the acute economic problems facing him, and consequently, he was less willing to maintain industrial peace in the name of patriotism while the owners of production reaped inestimable fortunes from the war business. The numerical strength of organized labor increased substantially with this new drive in 1916-1917 to attain greater economic justice. Figures confirm this growth:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Numerical Strength</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Numerical Strength</u>
1911	133,132	1914	166,163
1912	160,120	1915	143,343
1913	175,799	1916	160,407
		1917	204,640

²⁹Ibid., January 1915.

³⁰Labor Gazette, 1914-1917. Membership for the TLC: 1914- 80,094; 1915 - 71,419; 1916 - 71,419; 1917 - 81,687.

In 1916 and 1917 labor made itself heard in a society overwhelmingly preoccupied with war and its allied duties and responsibilities.

Organized labor showed signs of war weariness in 1916.

President Watters of the TLC voiced this feeling with a sense of disillusionment:

We are all desirous of seeing the war concluded as soon as possible and if there is any right in this war we hope that right will prevail.³¹

It seems that Watters had doubts whether Canada was still fighting for democracy and freedom. The hierarchy of organized labor was not interested in continuing the conflict until the enemy was humiliated but longed for peace. The Executive Council of the TLC exhorted labor

. . . to exert every influence and every means at its command to check the tide of devastation, to roll it back on itself and to hasten the long hoped-for era of restored peace, of triumphant liberty and of rejuvenated civilization.³²

The Winnipeg Voice, commenting on the mid-summer Stockholm peace conference, advised labor to seek peace at virtually any price:

Canadian labor ought to come out for peace. Germany's offer was doubtless made for Germany's advantage, and the acceptance of it would of course mean the crimes committed by the Central powers would go unavenged. But revenge doesn't do humanity any good. . .³³

³¹Trades and Labor Congress of Canada. Report of the proceedings for the annual convention of 1916.

³²Ibid., 21-22.

³³Winnipeg Voice, December 15, 1916.

The AFL and the TLC were mutually interested in promoting a peace settlement. The American labor organization felt, like President Woodrow Wilson, that the United States was peculiarly fitted for the role of peacemaker. The Canadian Federation of Labor, however, continued to endorse Canada's participation in the war without any qualms about the duration of the conflict.

3. Registration And Conscription

In the third and fourth years of war, conscription became a central and disturbing issue in Canadian society. Canadian labor had watched closely the events of 1915 that preceded the eventual adoption of conscription in England in January 1916. As a precaution the TLC, in September 1915, had declared itself categorically opposed to "all that savors of conscription, either here or within the Empire." It argued that

. . . conscription is antagonistic to the Labor interests and is equally at variance with the fundamental principles of constitutional freedom. It is a veiled serfdom, a mere reducing of the free and independent citizen to the level of the slave.³⁴

By the end of 1915 the mentors of labor were convinced that Canada would not, and certainly was in no position to pass conscription:

Everyone knows the difficulties conscriptionists in Canada would have to surmount. The population of this country is not homogeneous, like that of England. . . . Moreover, it would not be easy to generate the military passion which is necessary to the administration of conscription law. . . .³⁵

³⁴Trades and Labor Congress, op.cit. 1915. 15

³⁵Winnipeg Voice, January 21, 1916.

At the beginning of 1916 the Prime Minister of Canada issued an appeal to the Canadian nation. He asked that Canada should in the coming year double her military assistance to half a million men. The entreaty was generally received with "warm commendation"; however, labor circles lacked the same enthusiasm and admiration for the appeal. The Voice made, what it thought, a more important suggestion to Borden:

Let him (Borden) make a call upon 50,000 of the accredited well-to-do and wealthy men of Canada to pay a pro rata assessment upon their holdings to maintain the families of the enlisted men and to take care of the returned soldiers.³⁶

In the first five months of 1916 approximately 127,000 Canadians responded to the call. By summer the huge stream of recruits was reduced to a mere trickle.³⁷ In light of this development, the Government decided in August that a systemization of recruiting was necessary.

In the second week of June 1916, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association³⁸ had met at Hamilton to review the numerous problems confronting the captains of industry. The most agonizing problem was the shortage of labor. Several remedies were acknowledged: (1) to dilute the labor force with female workers (2) to extend the working week to seven days (3) to relax the immigration regulations (4) to introduce a system of registration so as to locate and distribute the essential manpower for the vigorous prosecution of the war. The Association took great pains to reveal the ebbing tides of recruiting, and the eventual

³⁶Winnipeg Voice, January 21, 1916.

³⁷Monthly recruiting totals for 1916: January - 29,212; February - 26,658; March - 32,819; April - 23,289; May - 15,090; June - 10,796; July - 8,675; August - 7,267; September - 6,357; October - 6,035; November - 6,548; December - 5,803.
J.C. Hopkins, op.cit. 1916. 302-304.

³⁸The C.M.A. had come into existence as the forces of trade unionism in Canada were consolidating in 1871. Its avowed goal was to promote the interests of industry.

repercussions to Canadian participation in the war if the situation was not remedied. The C.M.A. declared that indiscriminate recruiting methods were hazardous both to munition production and to the pursuance of war. With unanimity the following resolution was adopted:

Resolved, that the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, in annual meeting assembled, express to the Government of the Dominion of Canada its firm conviction that fighting for one's country is the supreme duty cast upon all men in time of war, and that furthermore the burden of service should be born equally by all properly qualified men of the nation. The Association also expresses its approval of any scheme, whether under the Militia Act, or the Defence of the Realm Act, or otherwise, for the complete and effectual mobilization of the entire resources of Canada in men and material, which in the opinion of this Association should be placed unreservedly at the disposal of our country.³⁹

The pilots of industry were prepared to endorse conscription; it remained for the Government to decide.

In August 1916 the Borden Government passed an Order-in-Council which established a National Service Board, headed by R.B. Bennett, to issue registration cards to be filled by the nation's workers in the hope of pin-pointing the location and distribution of manpower. The Dominion Government's move corresponded to the British National Registration Act of July 1915 which eventually had turned out to be a first step towards the adoption of conscription by the British Government. It was natural then that Canadian organized labor should have felt uneasy at the announcement of registration. Furthermore, the TLC was up in arms over the issue because the National Service Board was completely devoid of labor representation. Unlike the labor movement in Britain

³⁹Labour Gazette, July 1916. 1401.

which was given ample representation in the councils of government throughout the war years, Canadian labor was only granted courteous and perfunctory interviews by Government officials. Fear pervaded labor circles that registration would serve as a potential weapon for employers to stifle trade unionism. It was candidly argued that

In theory conscription is just, because it demands an equality of sacrifice. In practice it is unjust, giving the rich unlimited power over the poor and making the workman completely subject to the will of his employer. Under conscription the master-class can say to the workers, "Be careful. Do exactly as we wish, or in the army you go." They can utterly destroy the independence and the contractual rights of the workers.⁴⁰

The TLC fall convention of 1916 was reticent on the issue of registration; however, it once more emphatically declared its "unqualified opposition" to conscription. Late in 1916 the TLC Executive Council conducted an interview with the Prime Minister and Mr. R.B. Bennett. As a result of the meeting the leaders of the TLC noticeably lessened their deep aversion to registration because

"National Service" was defined . . . as applying not only to manpower, but to natural resources, wealth and the means of wealth production.⁴¹

In an attempt to assuage labor fears Sir Robert Borden assured the Executive Council of the TLC that "the proposals for National Service are not connected with conscription rather the idea was to make an appeal for voluntary service which would render unnecessary any resort to any compulsion." In the same breath the Prime Minister qualified his assurance:

I hope conscription may not be necessary
but if it should prove the only effective

⁴⁰Winnipeg Voice, November 3, 1916.

⁴¹Trades and Labor Congress. Report of the proceedings for the annual convention of 1917. 20.

method to preserve the existence of the State and of the institutions and liberties which we enjoy I should consider it necessary, I should not hesitate to act accordingly.⁴²

Borden's assurance was convincing enough for the Executive Council, and therefore on 21 December 1916 it recommended that "all members of affiliated unions fill in the answers, according to their conscientious opinions, and return the cards, as directed."⁴³ This immediately caused an unofficial split in the TLC: the East acquiesced; the West dissented. The Western affiliates refused to follow their Executive Council's recommendation, believing that unless they protested against registration, conscription would follow, and the rights of trade unionism would be seriously endangered.

On 26 December, 1916 the Winnipeg TLC formed a committee to oppose registration. This lead was eagerly followed by other urban centres in the West: Transcona, New Westminster, Victoria and Vancouver. The Voice reflected the opinion of Western labor, vigorously opposing registration on the grounds that it would inexorably lead to compulsion:

Our fundamental argument against compulsion is that it delivers labor bound into the hands of the capitalists. Its first effect is to prevent labor from taking advantage of favorable conditions in the labor market, while leaving capital unrestricted. Everyone knows what advantages the capitalist are taking of the law of supply and demand. Conscription would not hamper them in the least in this respect. But it would bring the worker to heel, depriving him of the right of collective bargaining and forcing him to accept whatever terms he might be offered.⁴⁴

⁴²Ibid., 21. See Appendix 24 for the complete letter.

⁴³Ibid., 32.

⁴⁴Winnipeg Voice, December 29, 1916.

The shouts of protest were sectional and not national. President Watters and the executive council of the TLC were subjected to bitter criticism from its Western affiliates. The Revelstoke Convention of the British Columbia Federation of Labor voiced a deep sense of disillusionment at the decision of the TLC executives to endorse registration because it felt that the national leaders of the labor movement had sold out to the Government to the detriment of the worker. J.H. McVety, the president of the British Columbia Federation of Labor, censured the TLC president for "planting the germs of sectional differences in the minds of the workers."⁴⁵ The Western and Eastern wings of the TLC were at loggerheads owing to their varying appreciation of the significance of registration. A temporary and unofficial split between the Eastern and Western member organizations of the TLC took place in the last weeks of 1916 but the espousal of conscription by the Borden Government in 1917 would bring greater unity if not greater determination within the TLC.

In the spring of 1917 English Canada was prepared to accept conscription. The voluntary system of recruitment no longer yielded the quotas of men to compensate for war fatalities. Many Canadians were seriously worried. They feared that Canada's presence in the war would become insignificant. The only remedy was conscription. On Friday 18 May, after his return from an Imperial War Conference, Sir Robert Borden announced to the nation that Canada was to adopt the principle of selective conscription, a system that would ensure vigorous Canadian participation in the war. English Canada applauded Borden. The Toronto Globe

⁴⁵Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour 1880-1930. Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University. 1968.

which had been anything but an ardent admirer of Borden's Government, extolled the good judgment of the Government in espousing conscription, because

There is but one course to pursue if the honor of Canada is to be preserved. Until the war is ended Canada must be a nation in arms.⁴⁶

A wave of protest emanating from labor circles made itself heard soon after Borden's announcement. Organized labor did not oppose conscription per se, but disliked it because it would render capital an incalculable advantage over the worker. Again the vortex of labor dissent was to be found in Western Canada: anti-conscription leagues were mobilized, mass protest meetings were held, and resolutions opposing conscription of manpower without that of wealth were passed by almost every major labor council of Western Canada. President Watters realized that the fears of Western radicals had come true and that his own confidence in the Government had proved false. As such, he immediately voiced the TLC's approval of laborite resistance to conscription and thus placed himself at the head of the mounting protest. On 30 May the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council issued a resolution purporting that conscription "would not only sacrifice the workers without their consent, but would also annul those protective measures, which organized labor has been able to force from the employers."⁴⁷ Similarly the Winnipeg and Calgary Trades and Labor Councils voiced their opposition. Organized labor in Winnipeg adopted the following resolution:

⁴⁶Toronto Globe, May 19, 1917.

⁴⁷J. Castell Hopkins, op.cit. 1917. 419.

That this Winnipeg Trades Labor Council stand opposed to conscription and demand that a referendum be submitted to the people.⁴⁸

Both the Voice and the Banner condemned Borden's Government for its actions.

On 2 June 1917 a national labor conference gathered at Ottawa to review the crisis facing labor. The caucus released a strongly worded protest:

We declare ourselves as most emphatically opposed to the proposed conscription measure, and we urge the workers of Canada to oppose by every means in their power the enactment of such legislation.⁴⁹

The conference took this position because Borden promised not to resort to conscription unless it was imperative for the protection of the State. Such a state of affairs had not developed; therefore, Borden's decision was unjustifiable to labor. Again trade unionism vociferously protested but failed lamentably to map out specific strategy to combat the forces of conscription.

In late August 1917 conscription became law. The Voice advised Canadians to observe it until repealed by the will of the people:

Conscription is the law of the land until the people declare that it is a law which they do not want. The election which is coming is to decide the fate of this law and determine whether it shall remain. It is for the people to decide.⁵⁰

Before labor had been able to marshall any significant force to dissuade Canadian parliamentarians from adopting the principle of conscription it was faced with a fait accompli. Although the question of a general strike had been considered by labor leaders, a lack of class dedication and

⁴⁸Winnipeg Voice, June 1, 1917.

⁴⁹Trades and Labor Congress, Report of the proceedings of the annual convention of 1917. 34.

⁵⁰Winnipeg Voice, August 31, 1917.

organization or perhaps more precisely a lack of popular sympathy for such a drastic course of action during a period of heightened national concentration on Canadian participation and progress in the Great War discouraged labor radicalism. Once the Military Service Act had been passed, the task of persuading the Government and the public to revoke conscription was made doubly difficult.

When the Trades and Labor Congress convened in Ottawa for its thirty-third annual convention in September 1917 the hierarchy of labor manifested a pronounced sense of disillusionment with the conflict, supposedly being waged for democracy and freedom. Labor's abhorrence of war was reiterated along with its craving for peace.

In the course of the convention a raging debate developed over the question of whether organized labor should respect the Military Service Act. At the beginning of the debate delegates expressed fear that verbal opposition to conscription might be interpreted as a felony; however, discussion was soon underway. The Congress divided on the issue of whether to resist conscription: some favored the abrogation of the act, others favored a qualified endorsement of conscription, and still others fully supported the act. The Transcona Trades and Labor Council was prepared to accept conscription of manpower if it was accompanied with the conscription of wealth. It presented the following resolution:

⁵⁰Winnipeg Voice, August 31, 1917.

Resolved, that in the event of the Dominion Government enforcing the conscription of manpower without the conscription of wealth production and the nationalization of all industries herein before described, the Council strongly urges that the delegates in convention assembled, formulate plans for a general strike of organized labor from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Strike to continue until such time as the Dominion Government does conscript wealth and nationalise the industries, this being a national necessity more than the conscription of manpower is a military necessity.⁵¹

This radicalism was more representative of Western than Eastern delegates.

Vice-President, R.A. Rigg, an influential voice of Western labor, also adamantly spoke out against conscription:

They (Government) have belied us completely. Don't blind yourself to the Junkerdom at home while desiring to destroy the Junkerdom in Germany. Conscription is being enforced by the big interests of the country, not so much for military as for industrial purposes and for what will happen after the war.⁵²

In contrast, Secretary-Treasurer Draper, an Eastern delegate, endeavored to dissuade the convention from a course of precipitate action:

Conscription is now law. . . It is all very well for the delegates to come here and say that they will do certain things, but if they go out and advocate the repeal of the Act and get arrested what protection can we give them?⁵³

Vice-President James Simpson, an outspoken Eastern leader, re-affirmed that the Congress had not diverged from its original stance on conscription; however, the TLC membership had to face reality and acknowledge its impotence:

⁵¹Trades and Labor Congress, op.cit. 1917. 147.

⁵²Ibid., 150.

⁵³Ibid., 151.

All the suggestions along that line are nothing but empty piffle. It is just as well at this time that I should point out that the organized workers of Canada stand in a position that has no parallel in any other country in the world. This Congress can only exert its moral influence in the enforcement of its decision, as the economic power necessary to support legislative demand is not invested in our movement, but is under the control of the international officers of the representative unions. When the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor reaches a decision, the members of that Council, being the heads of powerful international trade unions, can use their influence effectively. . . . In cases where our decisions are at variance with the decisions reached by the American Federation of Labor, regarding important national issues, it is difficult to secure the sympathy and support in the exercise of our economic power that we otherwise would receive if the Executive of the Congress were composed of the heads of powerful economic organizations.⁵⁴

Since the entry of the United States into the conflict during the spring of 1917, Samuel Gompers and the AFL had come out in favor of conscription, thereby making it increasingly arduous for the TLC not to follow its parent.

Along with the Transcona TLC resolution, the Farmillo amendment⁵⁵ to the Executive Council's policy on conscription was defeated because both statements attached a grave responsibility to resist conscription as long as the wealth of the country remained uncontrolled in the hands of the capitalists. Finally, the Committee on Officers Reports, under the chairmanship of Bancroft, presented a recommendation that effected the deletion of all words after "still" in the Executive Council's report, with the following amendment:

⁵⁴Ibid., 153.

⁵⁵Refer to Appendix 25 for the Farmillo's Amendment, and the Executive Council's position on conscription. Ibid., 1917

Under our present form of Government we do not deem it right, patriotic or in the interests of the Labor Movement of the Dominion of Canada to say or do anything that might prevent the Government of Canada from obtaining the result they anticipate in the raising of reinforcements for the Canadian Expeditionary Forces by the enforcement of the law. This Congress is emphatically opposed to any development in the enforcement of any legislation that will make for industrial conscription, or the interference with trade union movement; in the taking care of the interests of the organized workers of this Dominion.⁵⁶

The recommendation was carried by 136 to 106 votes. Organized labor thus decided to back away from confrontation. Instead of assuming the offensive in its drive to promote the welfare of the worker, it chose to take a defensive posture.

All the while the TLC was struggling to marshall a measure of resistance to conscription, the CFL, inculcated with patriotism, obeyed Government directives. Although in 1916 it spoke out mildly against conscription, in 1917 the CFL became a convert to the principle of compulsion. The president of the Federation explained:

In referring to the war in my address last year I expressed the possibility of conscription being resorted to in the event of insufficient volunteering. Volunteers have not been forth coming and conscription is now in force. I think we should endeavor to make the law a success in order that our brave fellows at the front -- many of them our trades union brothers -- will get all the support needed to carry on their part in the war to a successful termination.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Trades and Labor Congress, op.cit., 141.

⁵⁷Canadian Federation of Labor, Proceedings of the annual convention of 1917. 4.

4. Independent Labor Politics

The insensitivity of government to labor's grievances⁵⁸ and the large-scale corruption perpetrated on Parliament Hill during the war years sparked a wave of indignation among labor circles that warranted greater direct political involvement. The TLC, the spokesman of the majority of Canadian organized labor, had traditionally thought of itself primarily as a legislative lobbyist, refusing to entangle itself with direct labor politics. Although it recognized the importance of working class representation on all levels of government, it felt that it was premature to organize a central labor party, leaving politics to local labor bodies and only extending them moral support.

Early in 1917 labor leaders reflecting upon the ineptitude of the traditional two party system to handle the problems of the past became feverishly worried about the future. The Industrial Banner spearheaded this new movement of political consciousness among laborites:

Big issues, more momentous than ever before in its history, face the Labor movement. Issues that cannot be shelved, but have to be manfully encountered, and there never was a time when it was so necessary for the working of trades union organization to be persistently pressed. This is no time for indifference. . . Now is the time to get busy, and never before have the workers been so susceptible to trades union influences. During the last few months organized labor has been making phenomenal headway upon both sides of the international border line, and it now rests with Labor itself to take advantage of the opportunity that presents itself.

Let the watchword for the opening year be organization, education and agitation, and then more organization, education and agitation. Do not forget that knowledge is power.⁵⁹

⁵⁸For the TLC's platform of principles during the war see Appendix 26
⁵⁹Industrial Banner, January 12, 1917.

The adoption of conscription in May 1917 coupled with both war weariness and the incessant collaboration of business and government enhanced the bitterness of labor leaders. The failure to bring about a coalition government in the late spring only accentuated the feeling that the Liberal and Conservative parties were merely interested in the spoils of office regardless of the national good. The Voice conjectured:

It is altogether likely that the two parties
themselves are dead, only their leaders do
not know about it.⁶⁰

In the summer of 1917 an election seemed to be in the making. Labor leaders felt there was little to choose between the two parties: Borden's Government had persistently courted corruption, nepotism and profiteering since the outbreak of war; Laurier's party would not fare better if granted the opportunity to rule the country. The Industrial Banner summed up the situation:

Neither party is ready to sacrifice place and power for the good of the country or for the security of the Empire, and intelligent men and women who have studied out the situation are well aware . . . that a battle is now on at the capital that is, after all, only a struggle for the possession of the treasury benches. . . If the Government was honest it would never have brought a measure of conscription that while using compulsion in regard to manpower for military service, allowed the voluntary system to stand in regard to wealth, and Laurier, the silvertongued orator, is guided entirely by the prevailing sentiment in Quebec, which is almost solidly against conscription in any form.⁶¹

The solution for Labor was to send its own bona fide representatives to Parliament. The espousal of direct political action by laborites stemmed primarily from their disillusionment with traditional

⁶⁰Winnipeg Voice, June 8, 1917.

⁶¹Industrial Banner, June 22, 1917.

politics. Borden's call for conscription of manpower without a commensurate program to conscript wealth only triggered political action but it did not create the rationale for labor politics. Capitalism with its inequalities and not simply conscription served as the ideological foundation for the emergence of a labor party. The Voice issued a clarion call for an anti-business peoples' party:

Now that the old line political parties in Canada are side-stepping around one another with the amiable intention of using the knife -- it is about time that a new party to be known as that of the people should make an auspicious appearance . . . The new party of the people will represent not only organized labor, but it will include the farmers, ordinary dealers, salaried men and professional men -- in fact all those who have always been forced to pay tribute to special privilege and capital.⁶²

"Toilers" were exhorted to unite against the political forces that had insistently "turned a deaf ear"⁶³ to the appeals of the common people.

In September 1917 the TLC took a momentous step by declaring itself unequivocally in favor of a central labor party. The Congress articulated its new position:⁶⁴

. . . we are of the opinion that the time has arrived when the workers of Canada should follow British precedent and organize a Labor Party upon such a basis that trade unionists, socialists, fabians, co-operators, and farmers can unite to promote legislation in the best interests of the wealth producers of the nation.⁶⁵

With the blessing of the father organization of trade unionism, laborites took upon themselves the construction of a party machine.

⁶²Winnipeg Voice, June 15, 1917.

⁶³Industrial Banner, August 24, 1917.

⁶⁴At the 1906 convention the TLC had formulated a policy which allowed local labor bodies to organize politically if they should decide to do so.

⁶⁵Trades and Labor Congress, op.cit., 1917. 143.

In September and October Borden had maneuvered to bring about a coalition between the Conservative party and the secessionist Liberals. Many prominent Liberals lined up behind the Union Government, including such notables as Crerar, Sifton, Calder, Rowell, Carvell, Fielding. This impressive line-up of distinguished men proved to be an indispensable factor in the success of the Union Government. Unlike many Canadians, labor leaders were not dazzled by Union Government. They chose to fight for an Independent Labor Party. The issues of the election as presented by the news media were simple: to vote for Union Government meant the enforcement of conscription, and national honor; whereas to vote for the Opposition, among which labor candidates were lumped, it was tantamount to supporting the Kaiser, and to deserting the brave men at the front. Labor had chosen a most inopportune time to run the gamut of politics, for nationalism does not reason at times of real or imagined peril to its existence.

The mass of "toilers" were reminded again and again to remain loyal to their class interest:

Organized labor is now facing the supreme test. Never before in the history of the organization was it ever as essential for the organized wage earners to stand together as at the present moment. . . . Never before has such a golden opportunity presented itself, and if labor is but true to itself it is going to exert an influence in the future that it has never attained in the past.⁶⁶

Laborers had the vote and if they chose to vote for labor candidates they would certainly have a sizeable representation in the next Parliament.

⁶⁶Industrial Banner, October 19, 1917.

But the nascent political organization found it increasingly difficult to rival both the Union Government's political machine and its nationalistic image. The Unionist Government had widespread appeal: it represented a reform government, it advocated greater protection for the consumer, it promised to eliminate profiteering and patronage, it assured the farmer his sons would not be conscripted, and it gave a direct voice to labor in the cabinet by appointing Senator Roberston, an erstwhile labor mentor, minister without portfolio. The Voice did not take Roberston's appointment as an augury of better things to come, but interpreted it as a ruse to attract votes.⁶⁷

With the announcement that a general election was to be held on 17 December 1917, electioneering moved into high gear. In the third week of November, long over due, a Mr. Walter Rollo, a labor leader from Hamilton, stepped forward as the leader of the Canadian Labor Party. The labor press instructed the "toilers" of the nation what their responsibilities involved:

The duty before us now is to work for the election of the labor candidate each in his own constituency or assist in the nearest field. Where the prospects are bright work to make victory sure and where they are not so bright work all the harder in order that the seat may be marked out for the Labor Party in the future.⁶⁸

The new party's program lacked precision, but the Industrial Banner presented it as a cure-all. Several important planks characterized the political platform of labor: conscription of manpower to be supported along with conscription of wealth; the need for food and ships to be

⁶⁷Winnipeg Voice, October 26, 1917.
⁶⁸Industrial Banner, November 30, 1917.

recognized as vital as the procurement of military manpower; greater protection to be given to the rights and interests of the "worker" soldier and his dependents; graft and privilege to be abolished within the government structure; greater democratization of the governing process to be instituted by making Parliament more sensitive to the "common people" and by eliminating the arbitrary use of power by government as manifested in the case of espousing conscription and the War Times Election Act. The Banner stressed the importance of maintaining political isolation from the other political parties:

. . . It (I.L.P.) must maintain its independence, separate and entire from the old political organization, and appeal directly to the electorate in defence of the principles it was formed to propagate and uphold.⁶⁹

The Laborite political campaign was primarily predicated upon the notion that only labor representatives would genuinely protect and promote the interests of the worker. The Banner asked:

How are you going to act on election day,
Mr. Worker? Are you going to vote for yourself for once or keep on talking and acting like a parrot?⁷⁰

In Western Canada, two promising labor candidates, R.A. Rigg and R.S. Ward ran in Winnipeg. Both men conducted their political campaign in opposition to "Bordenism with its new guise." The Voice outlined their positions:

Rigg and Ward in this troubled time are in the arena in the interests of the common people. They are against the partisanship rule of Canada which has been adhered to by

⁶⁹Industrial Banner, November 2, 1917.
⁷⁰Ibid., November 9, 1917.

both Borden and Laurier. They are against the influence of class and capital which in the past have swayed both Borden and Laurier.⁷¹

The Voice prophesized that if laborites like Rigg and Ward were given the mandate a new era of politics would be ushered:

When the people will rule and when mere politicians with all their reactionary hangers-on will be relegated to this limbo of forgotten things.⁷²

The Industrial Banner censured the Borden Government for having dragged "the Conscription red-herring" in front of the electorate so as to make it an act of treason to vote against Union Government. The Banner repeatedly declared that food and supplies were equally important for the vigorous prosecution of war:

Conscript men for the battlefield if you will
but Conscript wealth too.⁷³

Prior to the election, Samuel Gompers paid a brief visit to Canada to promote the Canadian victory loan campaign; however, he did more than merely promote victory bonds. On 28 November, he delivered several speeches to Toronto audiences. He urged Canadians to buy bonds and to vote for Union Government. In his speech Gompers declared:

I hope I shall be able to avoid, and I shall try to avoid, any interference in the internal affairs of the Dominion, but I hold it to be a first duty of every Canadian by birth or by citizenship to do everything within his power to unite the people in winning this war. . . . having entered the war, the people of Canada without regard to political opinions, without regard to religion or any other difference ought to stand united in one solid phalanx to bring victory and glory to the Dominion and every other nation in the fight for freedom and democracy.⁷⁴

⁷¹Winnipeg Voice, November 23, 1917.

⁷²Ibid., November 23 1917.

⁷³Industrial Banner, November 30, 1917.

⁷⁴Samuel Gompers, American Labor and the War. George Doran Company. New York. 1919. 148.

The AFL and TLC were again at loggerheads over an important issue: the former supported Union Government, the latter supported an Independent Labor Party. On 7 December the following advertisement sponsored by the Union Government appeared in the Industrial Banner:

SAMUEL GOMPERS
SAYS:
To Bring Victory To Canada
SUPPORT UNION
GOVERNMENT
QUEBEC MUST BE MADE TO DO HER SHARE.⁷⁵

Gompers' visit to Canada did not in any way assist the potential success of independent labor politics in Canada.

On election day, Monday 17 December 1917, thirty-one labor candidates ran in English Canada. All thirty-one suffered defeat. In Ontario's eighty-two ridings, sixteen Labor candidates contested seats but only two of them managed to poll more than thirty per cent of the popular vote. In both instances, however, the Labor candidates ran as either Liberal-Laborites or as Unionist-Laborites. The success of this latter type of Labor candidate must be attributed to his dual identity. In Nipissing, Charles H. Harrison, a railwayman, having received the endorsement of the Independent Labor Party, was blessed also with the Union Government's label, and consequently triumphed over his Liberal opponent by a slight margin of 6,411 to 6,367 votes. Similarly, in the constituency of Timiskaming the Labor candidate received the endorsement of the Liberal party, providing him with greater prowess but the strength of the Unionist candidate, the Hon. F. Cochrane, Minister of Railways in the Borden Government, overcame his political rival with fifty-nine per cent of the popular vote.

⁷⁵Industrial Banner, December 7, 1917.

Of the remaining fourteen Ontario Labor candidates, only four obtained between twenty and thirty per cent of the popular vote: Walter Rollo, the leader of the I.L.P. during the 1917 election, acquired twenty-nine per cent of the popular vote in the riding of Hamilton West; the constituencies of Hamilton East, Toronto South, and Wellington South were the three other ridings in which the labor candidates obtained similar electoral responses. Ten of the sixteen Labor candidates in the province scored less than twenty per cent of the vote.

In Western Canada the Labor Party found electoral conditions even less favorable to their cause. Laborite success varied according to whether the Labor candidate had Liberal endorsement or was unopposed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Five of the thirteen Western Labor candidates that had the explicit or tacit endorsement of the Liberal party gained the highest degree of electoral success: R.A. Rigg and R.S. Ward ran in Winnipeg North and Winnipeg Centre obtaining twenty-seven per cent and fourteen per cent of the popular vote respectively; other Liberal-Labor candidates that contested seats in Moosejaw, Calgary East and Saskatoon polled twenty-five per cent, thirty-three per cent and sixteen per cent of the popular vote. The remaining eight pure Labor candidates in Western Canada averaged at best in most cases ten per cent or less of the constituency vote.⁷⁶

The Laborites bitterly bowed to defeat. The Banner headlined the news: "BIG INTERESTS ARE IN CONTROL IN OTTAWA." The exponents of organized Labor finally admitted in the aftermath of the election that the pull of conscription had been greater than any other

⁷⁶Laborite results in the election were calculated from the Parliamentary Guide 1918.

force in the election:

There is no doubt whatever about the people of Canada desiring to win the war and contribute the largest possible measure of support to the soldiers in the trenches, not only by sending adequate reinforcements to back them up but also in using all the available resources of the country with the same object in view.⁷⁷

During the war period (1914-1917), organized labor manifested, mainly through the auspices of the TLC, a rhetorical radicalism that rivaled the radicalism of most world labor bodies; however, it was never translated into deeds. In Australia organized labor, which was more highly organized⁷⁸ and homogeneous, resisted successfully the demands of the Government. It refused to co-operate with Registration in 1915, unlike the Canadian and British labor movements, and rejected conscription twice.⁷⁹ A Marxist historian has interpreted the meaning of Australia's intransigence to conscription:

The result of the Referendum showed that whilst the workers and the middle classes were deceived about the real character of the war, and for the most part were not actively opposed to it, they were not so far carried away by chauvinism that they were prepared to sacrifice the last vestiges of democratic rights upon the altar of militarism.⁸⁰

⁷⁷Industrial Banner, December 21, 1917.

⁷⁸In the 1890's an Australian Labor Party had been formed. In 1912 the trade union membership was 497,925 as compared to Canada's 160,120.

⁷⁹A referendum was held in 1916 on the question of conscription. Vote showed 1,160,033 to 1,087,557, in favor of the anti-conscriptionists. A second referendum was brought before the people in 1917. Again the anti-conscriptionists emerged victors by a majority of 166,588 votes. E.W. Campell, History of the Australian Labor Movement. Current Book Distributors, Sydney 1945.

⁸⁰Ibid.

Why didn't the labor movements in Canada and in Britain emulate the Australian example? War was at the door step of the British nation and therefore the labor movement was compelled, more or less, to co-operate. Furthermore, the British Government granted labor a direct voice in its councils, appeasing labor demands most of the time. In contrast, in Canada the labor movement had little, if any, direct influence upon the deliberations of government. Only in 1917 was labor given token representation in the Cabinet. Coupled with this, the remoteness of war made organized labor in Canada less susceptible to patriotism.

There are several contributing factors that prevented organized labor in Canada from radical action. First, as a whole, organized labor represented a miniscule fraction of the entire labor force. In 1917 the ranks of organized labor numbered 204,630 of the national labor force, numbering approximately 2,723,634, or less than 7.5% of the whole labor force. Similarly, the most outspoken organization, the TLC, represented only 41% of organized labor, and a mere 3% of all workers. Of the 2,723,634 workers in Canada 933,735 were engaged in agriculture.⁸¹ Second, the TLC, being economically dependent upon the continental labor movement, was de-radicalized to an incalculable degree by the AFL. No doubt Gompers' example in 1917 lead many workers to nationalism. Third, the mass of workers were impressed by the Unionist image of a reformed government, promising labor greater representation in the government and a larger slice of the economic pie. Fourth, geographic and ethnic heterogeneity of the nation made working class solidarity a more difficult object to achieve. Fifth, the disunity of organized labor, as demonstrated by the

⁸¹Tabulated from the following sources: The Canada Year Book 1918; Canadian Census of 1911; Trades and Labor Congress 1914-1917; Labor Organization in Canada 1918.

ideological dichotomy between the TLC and the CFL, existed among the rank and file at large, thereby stifling any possibility of national working-class consensus.

If the "toilers" of the West behaved more iconoclastically it was chiefly because, in the West, there existed a more concentrated type of industrial community in a sea of agricultural pursuit, and because the lack of diversity in industrial activity permitted workers to organize more readily along industrial lines.⁸² Also, the West had a school of industrial leaders dedicated to the example of the British Labor Party.⁸³

The election of 1917 clearly demonstrated that the I.L.P. lacked the grass root support that was essential to give Labor a direct voice in Parliament. The I.L.P. had to contend not only with class prejudice but also with a political climate which was unfavorable for politics of dissent.

⁸²In Ontario in 1917 there were 803 branches of trades unions, in Manitoba 136, in British Columbia 221, in Alberta 175 and in Saskatchewan 118. Also, in Ontario innumerable urban centres had trades union memberships exceeding the one thousand mark: whereas, in Manitoba only the city of Winnipeg, possessing more than 80% of the Province's trades union membership surpassed the 1000 mark. This was also representative of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia where members of organized labor were clustered in one or two urban areas.
Organization of Labor in Canada 1917.

⁸³D.C. Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike. University of Toronto Press. 1950.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The election returns for 1917 clearly established Anglo-Saxon Canadian preference for Union Government that had been ultimately constructed to implement the controversial Military Service Act. Many interpretations have been aired regarding the underlying motivations for the creation of Union Government. The Laurier apologists frequently attaching almost blind reverence to Laurier's utterings on the subject have laid emphasis upon selfish and nefarious motives governing Borden's decision to adopt conscription and to promote Union Government. Some historians have argued that Union Government was a plot hatched by anti-Quebec politicians to keep Laurier as a French Canadian from the office of premiership and to hand the reins of power to a moribund administration, or that the promoters of Union Government were influential business tycoons who thought it desirable to prop up an administration sympathetic to the dying concerns of the Grand Trunk and the Canadian National Railway.¹ Lastly, Union Government has been contrued as simply as an outstanding

¹O.D. Skelton, Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Oxford University Press. Toronto. 1921.

manifestation of English-Canadian imperialists to assist Great Britain at the cost of poisoning racial harmony in Canada. All of these interpretations reflected Laurier's judgment on the formation of Union Government and fail to reveal the genuine concern on the part of the country and of the political leaders at large toward Canada's role as an independent nation in the Great War.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier's inveterate opposition to conscription and Union Government was not primarily ideologically impelled nor was it simply inspired by his devotion to the spirit of democracy but rather his attitude was forged by political exigencies. Sir Wilfrid's political efforts as a national leader since his rise to power in 1896 had been directed constantly towards achieving racial harmony between French and English. Compromise had been a key to his past success in warding off racial antagonisms in the country.² At the same time, however, his compromising attitude taken on the question of Canadian participation in the Boer War while failing to increase Liberal support in Ontario engendered political and ideological hostility on the part of Henri Bourassa who consequently became the spokesman of the Nationalist movement in Quebec. John Willison, a political analyst and a close friend of Laurier, felt that Sir Wilfrid became acutely disenchanted with Ontario's lack of appreciation for his compromising stance on the question of Canadian involvement in the Boer War and subsequently in the aftermath of the 1900 election in which Laurier's government was defeated in Ontario, the Liberal chieftain increasingly looked to Quebec for political support.³ Such

²Blair Neatby, Laurier and a Liberal Quebec. Ph.D. Thesis. University of Toronto.

P.D. Stevens, Laurier and the Liberal Party in Ontario, Ph.D. Thesis. University of Toronto. 1966.

³Sir John Willison, Reminiscences, Political and Personal. McClelland and Stewart. Toronto. 1919.

was the case in 1917 -- Laurier's conscription policy was largely dictated by his fear of forfeiting Quebec's allegiance and by his distrust of Ontario's loyalty.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier had become very sensitive by 1917 to the growing Nationalist opposition nurtured by Henri Bourassa in Quebec against his so-called imperialistic tendencies. As such, in the election of 1917 Laurier faced the threat of being dethroned by Henri Bourassa as leader of French Canada had he not assumed sufficiently a hostile posture to conscription. Within the confines of his own province Laurier projected himself as an anti-conscriptionist; outside the province of Quebec he sedulously strove to assuage both conscriptionist and anti-conscriptionist opinion. His referendum policy, typical of Laurier's past attempts to compromise on national issues which aroused racial discord, was ultimately designed to postpone public judgment on the volatile issue of conscription until after a straight party electoral contest had been waged. If Laurier had been successful in his maneuver to eliminate the conscription issue, as he did in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, he easily would have emerged victorious in the election.

While for the most part in English Canada Laurier and the Liberal party became identified with French Canada's attitude to the war, Sir Robert Borden and Union Government became symbols of English Canada's determination to pursue vigorously the war with undiminished ardor and participation. Accordingly the clash of races was inevitable in the election of 1917 and the electoral support for the political parties in-

volved invariably reflected the racial cleavage in the nation. In English Canada wherever French- and German-Canadian communities flourished the vote for Liberalism was proportionately strong. This electoral behavior was particularly apparent in Ontario and New Brunswick where French Canadians abounded in great numbers. In both provinces less than twenty per cent of the English-speaking electorate supported Liberalism while the French-Canadian electorate voted predominantly for Laurier. The minority English vote that Laurier managed to attract in Ontario and New Brunswick can be attributed largely to two factors: the traditionally strong Liberal constituency and the Liberal practice in many cases of assuming a double identity as both a Laurierite and a pro-conscriptionist. There is little evidence to suggest that there existed in English Canada any sizeable body of support for Laurier simply on the grounds of opposition to conscription.

In Nova Scotia and in Prince Edward Island where Union Government and the Liberal party came close to splitting the popular vote between themselves the conscription issue played an insignificant role as a result of the Liberal party's policy in the area to endorse conscription as well as Laurier. In Western Canada only the traditional grass-root strength of Liberalism prevented a more humiliating defeat than experienced by the Liberal party in 1917. Alberta, in particular, voiced this latter loyalty by affording Liberalism 42.5 per cent of the popular vote, while the traditional English-speaking support for Liberalism in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia was less evident.

Laurier's failure to convince English Canadians of the lack

of urgency involved in implementing conscription in 1917 is no more apparent than in his inability to harness the latent yet potentially explosive dissatisfaction of both the farmer and the laborite. Although both the farmer and the industrial worker were intensely disenchanted with the Borden regime and with the economic injustices prevailing at the time, they accepted conscription and Union Government in the hope that Canadians would help to bring the war to a successful end while the new coalition government would prove more progressive and less business oriented than its predecessor. Organized labor entered the field of politics in 1917 as an independent party primarily to protest against the corruption of the Borden administration and against the insensitivity of the federal government to labor's economic and social needs. In the election campaign organized labor did not oppose conscription per se but favored legislation which would conscript not only manpower but also wealth.

The conscription issue prevented Laurier from certain victory in 1917. War and Canada's enthusiastic response to it had made politicking anathema to a great number of English Canadians thus making it possible for the Borden administration with all its ineptitude to survive until 1917 when the introduction of the conscription issue temporarily absolved Sir Robert Borden of his past political mismanagement of the country's affairs in the hope that a coalition government would save the country from international embarrassment and from economic chaos.

French Canada's allegedly lethargic response to the nation's recruiting and Sir Wilfrid's stance vis à vis conscription exacerbated the traditional

racial struggle in the country. In many ways the election of 1917 represented an electoral joust between the conflicting understandings of French and English Canadians as to Canada's role in the European war. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's efforts at compromise proved to no avail in the eyes of English Canada because his position was equated with French Canada's restrained devotion to Canadian participation in the war. The secessionist movement within the Liberal party endorsing Union Government isolated Laurier with his French-Canadian wing of the party and merely emphasized Sir Wilfrid's association with French-Canadian predilections. As such many English Canadians felt a threat to their influence and power as the majority group in the nation and thereby fervently encouraged and endorsed Union Government to promote their aspirations. The overwhelming vote in favor of Union Government in most of English Canada was ultimately a racial display of English-Canadian determination to have its vision of nationhood, its identity and its ideals predominate at a crucial time of nation building.

APPENDIX I

The Union Government was finally constituted as follows:*

Department	Minister	Politics
Prime Minister and Minister of Ex- ternal Affairs	Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Laird Borden	Cons.
President of the Privy Council	Hon. Newton Wesley Rowell, K.C.	Lib.
Trade and Commerce	Rt. Hon. Sir George Eulas Foster	Cons.
Public Works	Hon. Frank Bradstreet Carvell	Lib.
Interior	Hon. Arthur Meighen, K.C.	Cons.
Railways and Canals	Hon. John Dowsley Reid	Cons.
Finance	Hon. Sir Wm. Thomas White	Cons.
Postmaster-General	Lieut.-Col. Pierre Edouard Blondin	Cons.
Marine and Fisheries and Naval Service	Hon. Charles Colquhoun Ballantyne	Lib.
Justice	Hon. Charles Joseph Doherty, K.C.	Cons.
Militia and Defence	Maj.-Gen. Sydney Chilton Mewburn	Lib.
Secretary of State	Hon. Martin Burrell	Cons.
Labour	Hon. Thomas Wilson Crothers, K.C.	Cons.
Inland Revenue	Hon. J.P. Albert Sévigny	Cons.
Customs	Hon. Arthur Lewis Sifton, K.C.	Lib.
Agriculture	Hon. Thomas Alexander Grerar	Lib.
Militia -- Overseas	Hon. Sir Albert Edward Kemp	Cons.
Immigration and Colonization	Hon. James Alexander Calder	Lib.
Sollicitor-General	Hon. Hugh Guthrie, K.C.	Lib.
Without Portfolio	Hon. Gideon Decker Robertson	Lib.
Without Portfolio	Hon. Alexander K. Maclean, K.C.	Lib.
Without Portfolio	Hon. Frank Cochrane	Cons.
Without Portfolio	Sir James Alexander Lougheed	Cons.

*Hopkins, J. Castell, The Canadian Annual Review. 1917. 584.

APPENDIX II

Copy of Sir Robert Borden's first manifesto to the nation after the formation of Union Government:

OTTAWA, October 18, 1917.

TO THE PEOPLE OF CANADA:

The present Union or National Government has been formed with a desire to give representation to all elements of the population who support the purpose and effort of Canada in this war. Representative men of both political parties are included in its personnel; and it is intended forthwith to give to Labour special representation upon the principle already followed with regard to Agriculture. Impressed by the urgent necessity of putting aside all minor considerations, of sinking all party differences, and of presenting a united front at this solemn and momentous juncture in the nation's history, the members of the Government have come together in the duty of service to the national interest.

The lines of policy which will be followed chiefly relate to the prosecution of the war and to consideration and solution of problems which will arise during its progress or which will supervene upon the conclusion of peace.

They may be outlined as follows:--

1--The vigorous prosecution of the war, the maintenance of Canada's effort by the provision of necessary reinforcements, the immediate enforcement of the Military Service Act, and the most thorough co-operation with the Governments of the United Kingdom and of the other Dominions in all matters relating to the war.

2--Civil Service Reform, with a view to extending the principle of the present Civil Service Act to the Outside Service, and thus to abolish patronage and to make appointments to the Public Service upon the sole standard of merit. The Civil Service Commission has already been directed to make a report to the Prime Minister as to the

*Borden Papers, October 18, 1917. 41474.

necessary steps for that purpose. Such arrangements will be subject to the existing regulations, which give preference in appointments to returned soldiers who are duly qualified.

3--The extension of the franchise to women, with suitable provisions for enabling married women to determine their nationality and to obtain naturalization, notwithstanding marriage.

4--Adequate taxation of war profits and increased taxation of incomes, as necessitated by the continuance of the war.

5--A strong and progressive policy of Immigration and Colonization, accompanied by suitable provisions to induce settlement upon the land, to encourage increased agricultural production, and to aid in the development of agricultural resources.

6--Effective arrangements for demobilization, for the care and vocational training of returned soldiers, for assistance in enabling them to settle upon the land, and for adequate pensions to those who have been disabled and to the dependents of those who have fallen.

7--The development of transportation facilities; the co-operative management of the various railway systems so as to ensure economy in operation, to avoid unnecessary construction, and to secure the widest and most effective use of existing railway facilities; the encouragement and development of the shipbuilding industry and the establishment of steamship lines upon both oceans and upon the Great Lakes; co-operation with the various Provincial Governments for the improvement of highways; the investigation of the possibilities of Air Service for important national purposes.

8--The reduction of public expenditure, the avoidance of waste, and the encouragement of thrift.

9--Effective measures to prevent excessive profits, to prohibit hoarding and to prevent combination for the increase of prices, and thus to reduce the cost of living.

10--The encouragement of co-operation among those engaged in agricultural production, with a view to diminishing the cost of production and marketing so that the price paid to the producer may conform more closely to that paid by the consumer.

11--The general development of all the varied resources of Canada, and their conservation and utilization to the best advantage of the people, with the co-operation and assistance of the State in every reasonable way for that purpose.

12--Adequate consideration of the needs of the industrial population; the maintenance of good relations between employers and employed, and such conditions of employment as will ensure suitable standards of living among the labouring classes.

The policy of the Government will also aim at a truer understanding and comprehension between the various communities, both East and West, and the development of a national spirit of united effort among our people as the trustees of a great heritage.

For the purpose of effectively carrying out these policies the following methods have been determined:--

1. A new portfolio, that of Immigration and Colonization has been established.

2. For the effective prosecution of the war a permanent committee of the Cabinet will be established.

3. For the purpose of considering and carrying out the other lines of policy above mentioned, another permanent committee of the Cabinet will also be consulted.

The Orders in Council establishing these committees have been prepared, and as soon as they are approved by His Excellency the Governor General, they will be given to the press for publication. The personnel of each committee will be announced at the same time.

R.L. BORDEN

APPENDIX III

Sir Wilfrid Laurier's election manifesto as reported by the London Advertiser on 5 November 1917:

Ottawa. Nov. 4 -- Sir Wilfrid Laurier has issued his manifesto. In a document addressed "To the Canadian People," the Opposition leader declares his policy and outlines his aims:

On the all-important question of participation in the war, Sir Wilfrid aims that "a fundamental objection to the government's policy of conscription is that it conscripts human life only and does not attempt to conscript wealth, resources or the services of any persons other than those who come within the age limit prescribed by the military service act.

"The first duty of a Laurier administration," says the manifesto, "would be to find the men, money and resources necessary to insure the fullest measure of support to our heroic soldiers at the front and to enable Canada to continue to the very end to do her splendid part to win the war." To this Sir Wilfrid adds:

"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 please myself forthwith to submit the act to the people, and with my followers to carry out the wishes of the majority of the nation as thus expressed." As remedies for an economic situation "which is admittedly critical," Sir Wilfrid Laurier promises: "Tariff reform, control of food supplies and prices, and a stop to profiteering."

The two increases to the tariff made since the beginning of the war, he would remove. These are seven and a half per cent on all commodities coming into Canada from outside Great Britain, and five per cent on goods coming from Great Britain. He also would remove the duties on agricultural implements and other essentials as demanded by the western farmers.

In connection with the high cost of living he would "take 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." If satisfactory arrangements could not be made with the food-producing factories, Sir Wilfrid declares he would not hesitate to commandeer. The manifesto proceeds:

"One of the most important contributions towards winning the war is to put a stop to profiteering on war supplies. The Government has deliberately encouraged profiteering for the benefit of its

partisan followers. A first duty of my administration would be to ensure to the country which pays for war supplies, the excess of exorbitant profits being realized by profiteers." If necessary, Sir Wilfrid continues, he would not hesitate to take control of the factories engaged in the manufacture of war materials. Suitable Government shops also, Sir Wilfrid believes, should be turned to the production of war materials at cost prices.

Sir Wilfrid passes in review alike some of the legislation of the late Government and the program of the present. He finds no trace in the manifesto of the Union Government that its Liberal members have influenced their colleagues to the adoption of measures they deemed essential. He refers to most of the article in that manifesto as "stale commonplaces . . . resurrected for a new election." He declares of the war-times election act passed last session that "It is a blot upon every instinct of justice," and holds the view that the Canadian Northern Railroad purchase should be adjudicated upon by the new parliament.

A consultation of 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 no 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.

"Most of the articles in the Government manifesto are merely stale commonplaces extracted from the conservative program 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 services reform -- two reforms which the Opposition would have been happy to support in the last parliament if the Government had afforded them the opportunity.

"In the manifesto a strong and progressive policy of immigration" is promised. This will be perhaps the most important question after the war. The burdens 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 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, there no such indignity has been placed upon naturalized citizens.

"An article of the program 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 the 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 the last session is that the Government becomes the owner of the stock of the company, at the nominal value of sixty million dollars. There never was a dollar paid in the stock. Expert 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, which their experts have declared absolutely 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 finally closed by the action of a moribund parliament, but that the whole matter should be reported to and adjudicated upon by the new parliament.

"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 measure 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.

"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 even moderate incomes. 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 manifesto, as 'excess 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 it hard? The remedies are at hand, and I once set down the policy.

"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 to 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 $7\frac{1}{2}$ 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 hindrances 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."

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

"In connection with the high cost of living, I would take 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 management 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 this all. The Government is invested with powers which they could and should have used to reduce the prices 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 insure 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 be published in Canada.'

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

"One of the most important contributions toward winning the war is to put a stop to profiteering on war supplies. The Government has deliberately encouraged profiteering for the benefit of its partisan followers. A first duty of my administration would be to secure to the country, which pays for the war supplies, the excess of exorbitant prices 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. I believe 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 purpose to the production of war materials, ships etc., for the benefit of the country, at cost price. 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 proof is needed.

"At the very beginning, penetrated sic 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 answered 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 British people 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 discussed 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.

"No less emphatic had been the language of the Government. At the beginning of the session of 1916, in answer to my inquiry whether the promise recently made by the prime minister of enlisting 500,000 men meant conscription, he answered in these words:

"My right honorable 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 today with emphasis."

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

"Throughout the whole campaign of 1910 and 1911, I may recall that the Nationalist-Conservative alliance which opposed the naval policy of the Liberal Government of that time asserted that such a policy meant conscription. 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 this 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 universal acceptance, even in the party to which I belonged, but even yet I hold that to coerce when persuasion has not been attempted is not sound policy, and in this I appeal to the impartial judgment 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, the most modern method of consultation of the people, without the complications inseparable from a general election. A referendum had also been asked on this very question by organized labor. My request was denied.

"I appeal with great confidence to the fair judgment of the country that the introduction of conscription at this juncture and in the above manner 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 to hearty co-operation 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 services 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 these men, money and resources necessary to insure the fullest measure of support to our heroic soldiers at the front, and to enable Canada to continue to the very end to do 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 pledge 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, and a fair trial would receive from a generous people a ready response which would bring men to the ranks, with good-will and enthusiasm, and which would eliminate from our political life one of its most harrowing problems, as no loyal Canadian can view without his gravest apprehension a dispirited 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 conclusive 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 organizing the nation, in order that, so far as may be possible, the resources and population of Canada in their entirety may be made of service in the successful prosecution of the war.

Today, 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 this 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.

"Mr. Crothers, minister of labor, speaking recently at St. Thomas, Ont., 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 war, outside her own territory.'

"The doctrine, first put forth in the riding of Drummond-Arthabasca. In the autumn of 1910, by the whole Nationalist body, including two of the present Quebec ministers won the election for them."

Sir Wilfrid declares that members of the Borden Government, in the general elections of 1911, in their appeals to Quebec on the naval bill, educated "the people to reject any appeal to assist in fighting the battles of the Empire outside the Dominion."

"The greatest service that can be rendered the brave men who have first claim on our gratitude and sympathy," he continues, "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.

"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 developing 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 or equitable."

In an effort to rectify this state of affairs, and to emphasize his policy that "the nation's obligation to the soldiers and their dependents must be discharged by the nation, and not through the medium of public benevolence or charity," Sir Wilfrid quotes the resolution introduced by Mr. Copp, member for Westmoreland, at the last session of Parliament, during the consideration of the military service bill.

The resolution, he continues, was opposed by the Government, and the motion for its adoption was defeated. But the necessity for action still exists, and prompt action must be taken to put the

the soldiers and dependents beyond any possibility of want after public subscriptions have ceased, and the glamour and excitement of the war have worn away.

"In order to be effective, to satisfy the public confidence, and to 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 has discarded that fundamental principle of the institutions of a free people. They have designingly 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 the war-times 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 pretence that being born in enemy countries, in Germany and Austria, they might be biased in favor 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 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 those 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 in 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 provinces, women are electors in the Dominion. The act of last session snatches away that 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 are 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 re-constructed Government have put the mantle of their respectability upon the 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 characters. Such legislation is repugnant to every sense of justice and right. It has for its object and for its effect to discourage and 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 it representatives of business, of labor and 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, representatives 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 judgement. 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 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 the 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."

APPENDIX IV

LAST QUESTIONS FOR ELECTIONS*

Every elector should concentrate attention on the following vital questions:

Is the Dominion of Canada to be governed by one Province, Quebec?

Is it fair to becloud the issue by attributing to Union Government matters which took place before it came into existence?

Is it not impossible to support conscription and yet to follow a leader who opposes conscription?

Are not Mr. Rowell's words absolutely correct that a reactionary movement is at work in Quebec and is using this hour of grave national peril to dominate the political situation throughout Canada?

Is it not true, as Bishop Fallon said, that it would be a crime to slacken our purpose connected with the war after all the sacrifices we have made?

Can any Canadian honestly deny that the defeat of the Union Government would mean or real and definite slackening of our purpose?

Would it not bring encouragement to Germany and discouragement to our Allies?

Is not the vital question of the hour the question of the war, and nothing else?

Would not a refusal to send more military help to the front, or even to delay in so doing, have disastrous moral and political effects?

Can we desert our brave fellows whom we have all along encouraged to go and fight?

Can we assert anything short of a valid reason for the closest friends and trust lieutenants of Sir Wilfrid Laurier deliberately leaving him at the present juncture?

Is it not a significant fact that the religious and educational leaders in English-speaking Canada are united for the Union Government because it is felt that the election involves moral and patriotic issues?

Is not the testimony from the trenches overwhelmingly and practically unanimous in favor of immediate furtherance of the war through conscription?

Is it not a fact, Professor Gilmour has said, that voluntary recruiting is dead beyond even the power of Sir Wilfrid Laurier to revive it?

Is it not this a moment for patriotism, and not for political partisanship?

No one who answers these questions fairly and fully can doubt this duty to vote for the Union Government.

*Toronto Globe, December 15, 1917.

APPENDIX V

Electoral Analysis of Russell, Ontario:

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
Ottawa, Rideau Ward	416	510	1512	791	555
Gloucester	846	804	3,227	2,844	168
Eastview	694	197	869	2,075	149
Russell	610	316	1,139	2,670	69
Cumberland	469	514	2,173	1,794	31
Rockland	554	80	337	3,030	6
Osgoode	429	706	4,233	208	33
Clarence	948	137	710	4,684	13
Cambridge	668	46	269	3,549	18
Casselman	184	43	80	830	43
TOTAL	5,818	3,353	15,253	22,475	1,091

APPENDIX VI

Constituencies in Ontario won by the Liberal party in 1917:*

DISTRICT	POPULATION	LIBERAL MAJORITY	ETHNIC ORIGIN		
			Brit.	French	Ger.
Middlesex W.	16,214	Ross, D.C. (399)	13,710	111	701
Prescott	26,968	Proulx, E. (2,304)	6,546	20,124	-
Renfrew S.	27,852	Pedlow, I.E. (63)	17,455	3,149	3,683
Russell	39,434	Murphy, C. (2,107)	15,253	22,475	1,091
Waterloo N.	33,619	Euler, W.D. (1,864)	6,855	194	25,479
Bruce S.	26,249	Traux, R.E. (172)	16,125	154	8,246
Essex N.	38,006	Kennedy, W.C. (446)	19,482	14,078	2,119
Kent	55,995	McCoig, A.B. (1,089)	43,405	5,956	2,674

*The following electoral analyses do not include the military vote with the single exception of the Liberal majorities on this page.

APPENDIX VII

Electoral Analysis of Prescott, Ontario:

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
Alfred	564	26	192	3,068	1
Caledonia	282	135	681	1,550	4
Hawkesbury E.	608	247	1,216	2,816	2
Hawkesbury W.	150	203	933	907	-
Longeuil	149	45	184	884	-
Plantagenet N.	514	118	761	2,893	-
Plantagenet S.	493	147	952	2,526	5
Hawkesbury Town	612	142	591	3,631	21
L'Original	200	31	214	1,122	7
Vankleek Hill	122	211	921	727	-
TOTAL	3,721	1,305	6,546	20,124	40

APPENDIX VIII

Electoral Analysis of Essex N., Ontario:*

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
Wakerville	354	902	2,385	570	232
Belle River	134	10	46	462	6
Windsor City	3,550	3,438	10,753	4,113	943
Maidstone	324	258	1,449	793	316
Sandwich E.	589	76	872	3,014	147
Sandwich S.	212	137	1,182	359	46
Sandwich W.	678	151	754	2,306	88
Sandwich Town	397	203	934	1,139	120
TOTAL	7,071	5,379	19,482	14,078	2,119

* Analysis includes only major polling divisions. Total includes all polling divisions.

APPENDIX IX

Electoral Analysis of Waterloo N., Ontario:

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
Woolwich	573	113	576	5	3,418
Wellesley	774	234	1,151	60	3,535
Waterloo Township	462	101	368	1	3,098
Kitchener City	2,533	1,974	3,416	102	10,633
Waterloo Town	842	540	920	22	3,324
Elmira	221	191	424	4	1,344
TOTAL	5,405	3,153	6,855	194	25,479

APPENDIX X

Electoral Analysis of Bruce South, Ontario:

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
Brant	514	324	2,042	5	1,465
Carrick	707	147	705	18	3,264
Culross	376	209	1,477	10	902
Elderslie	225	314	1,780	2	166
Greenock	347	257	1,795	44	706
Huron	326	399	2,825	2	72
Linloss	198	261	1,759	5	43
Chesley	274	223	1,184	7	458
Lucknow	88	163	918	2	17
Paisley	126	114	771	1	36
Teeswater	101	124	717	20	115
Walkerton	323	291	1,511	38	1,002
TOTAL	3,605	2,824	16,125	154	8,246

APPENDIX XI

Electoral Analysis of Renfrew South, Ontario:*

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
Admaston	256	176	1,598	136	230
Bagot & Blithefield	129	146	920	205	76
Brougham	82	12	372	114	62
Gratton	339	174	1,264	370	341
Brudenell	147	28	529	14	188
Horton	94	197	1,206	83	18
McNabb	336	402	2,952	281	367
Arnprior	360	502	2,857	927	487
Renfrew	549	727	2,735	490	103
Sebastopol	97	18	232	8	352
TOTAL	3,194	2,677	17,455	3,149	3,683

*Includes only major polling divisions. Total includes all polling divisions.

APPENDIX XII

Electoral Analysis of Nipissing, Ontario.*

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
North Bay	795	1,492	5,232	1,446	259
Widdifield	117	147	718	423	52
Ferris	211	66	211	981	3
Bonfield	298	53	160	535	29
Calvin	34	79	383	102	32
Mattawa	235	60	532	847	49
Papineau	100	34	173	405	36
Chisholm	157	114	487	507	55
Sturgeon Falls	350	182	839	1,239	36
Cache Bay	88	85	430	438	8
Springer	182	45	258	950	13
Caldwell	255	18	78	1,351	7
Sudbury	672	813	2,218	1,518	52
Coppercliff	126	504	1,168	251	72
TOTAL	6,218	4,879	34,552	26,277	2,920

* Analysis includes major polling divisions. Total includes all polling divisions.

APPENDIX XIII

Electoral Analysis of Essex South, Ontario:*

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
Anderdon	342	84	508	1,304	94
Tilbury N.	360	50	382	1,765	13
Amherstburg	247	229	1,303	862	146
Tilbury Village	69	21	154	235	9
Tilbury W.	155	193	1,140	447	119
Leamington	319	462	2,198	106	286
Gasfield S.	217	287	1,609	114	612
Gasfield N.	219	288	1,714	60	124
Colchester N.	229	180	1,026	557	193
Colchester S.	341	276	1,809	219	461
Mersea	384	507	3,621	196	193
Malden	117	113	757	537	37
Pelee Island	91	80	561	57	120
TOTAL	3,450	3,331	18,825	6,655	2,881

* Analysis includes major polling divisions. Total includes all polling divisions.

APPENDIX XIIIa

Electoral Analysis of Perth North, Ontario:

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
North Easthope	401	76	795	7	1,234
Ellice	640	132	1,254	6	1,675
Mornington	322	333	1,963	30	1,099
Elma	275	693	3,342	12	531
Wallace	271	344	1,441	-	1,096
Listowel	191	521	1,706	28	519
Milverton	135	96	336	1	476
Stratford City	1,797	2,665	10,555	201	1,714
TOTAL	4,045	4,860	22,292	285	8,344

APPENDIX XIV

Constituencies in Ontario in which Liberals took at least
40% of the vote:

DISTRICT	POPULATION		% OF TOTAL VOTE WON BY LIBERALS*	ETHNIC ORIGIN		
				Brit.	French	Ger.
Algoma E.	44,628	R	48%	19,739	11,571	2,170
Bruce N.	23,783	R	42%	20,138	17	2,273
Dundas	18,165	R	42%	11,762	1,339	2,605
Elgin E.	17,597	R	49%	15,050	237	1,641
Elgin W.	26,715	U	45%	20,747	336	1,771
Essex S.	29,541	R	51%	18,825	6,655	2,860
Grey N.	26,991	U	42%	24,809	276	1,042
Grey S.	19,250	R	45%	12,792	45	6,477
Haldimand	21,562	R	43%	15,302	194	4,477
Hastings W.	30,825	U	47%	24,993	1,346	1,416
Huron S.	19,508	R	49%	14,749	685	3,955
Lambton E.	22,223	R	46%	20,451	290	1,076
Muskoka	21,233	R	40%	17,919	952	1,171
Norfolk	27,110	R	46%	20,313	519	3,902
Oxford N.	25,077	R	48%	20,585	107	3,461
Perth S.	18,947	R	52%	14,823	76	3,879
Perth N.	30,235	R	45%	21,001	225	8,344
Renfrew N.	23,617	R	49%	14,321	2,958	5,847
Timiskaming	50,176	R	47%	34,119	9,615	113
York N.	22,415	U	46%	19,142	443	913

* This percentage has been calculated without the military vote.

"R" represents rural dominated constituencies, "U" stands for urban dominated

APPENDIX XV

Electoral Analysis of Algoma E., Ontario:*

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
Blind River	295	92	813	1,622	43
Gordon	54	90	363	13	50
Dury Denison & Graham Townships	77	120	621	548	282
Dowling	52	12	97	138	-
Bidwell	0	42	355	-	-
Gore Bay	53	122	661	5	24
Cockburn	10	34	288	11	20
Merritt & Baldwin	234	104	300	621	15
Howaland	31	124	388	4	2
John Island	11	2	41	111	10
Lumsden & Rayside	217	6	42	896	-
Thessalon	216	261	1,324	530	41
Clemsford	111	8	74	462	12
Balfour	75	7	105	422	28
TOTAL	3,501	7,318	19,739	11,571	2,170

*Analysis includes major polling divisions. Total includes all polling divisions. Algoma East is a prime example of the racial cleavage evident in most of those constituencies that gave Laurier at least forty per cent of the civilian vote in Ontario.

APPENDIX XVI

Electoral Analysis of Grey S., Ontario:*

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
Normandy	560	226	1,427	2	1,998
Sullivan	366	307	1,761	1	1,062
Hanover	532	169	703	3	1,628
Bentinck	305	388	2,074	12	885
Egremont	313	378	2,239	7	189
Durham	111	339	1,454	3	95
Chatsworth	39	61	336	-	21
Newstadt	81	13	40	-	425
TOTAL	3,586	4,366	12,792	45	6,477

*Analysis includes major polling divisions. Total includes all polling divisions.

APPENDIX XVII

Popular Percentage of Vote Rendered to the Conservative and Liberal Party in the Period 1896-1917 in Western Canada

PROVINCE	1896		1900		1904		1908		1911		1917	
	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L
Manitoba	47.0	35.0	48.2	51.8	41.8	49.7	51.5	45.4	51.9	44.8	79.7	20.3
* Saskatchewan	43.9	46.0	44.9	55.1	41.5	58.2	36.8	56.6	39.0	59.4	72.0	25.9
Alberta							44.4	50.2	42.5	53.3	61.0	35.5
British Columbia	45.0	49.1	40.9	45.9	38.8	59.5	46.4	35.9	58.8	37.5	68.4	25.6

*Bracket enclosure is to indicate that Saskatchewan and Alberta compose the North West Territories.
op.cit., Beck

APPENDIX XVIII

Electoral Analysis of Kent, New Brunswick:

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
Richibucto Parish	398	265	971	1,441	-
Welford	226	282	2,389	628	-
Wellington	665	115	615	3,478	-
St. Mary's	373	48	304	2,121	-
St. Paul	193	40	92	1,299	-
Dundas	539	105	273	3,007	-
Acadieville	259	25	70	1,221	-
Carleton	181	57	491	648	-
St. Louis	346	40	24	1,751	-
Harcourt	130	99	813	273	-
St. Charles	199	50	2	1,263	-
TOTAL	3,491	1,126	6,598	17,436	-

APPENDIX XIX

Electoral Analysis of Restigouche - Madawaska, New Brunswick:

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
Dalhousie Parish	292	201	883	1,120	-
Balmoral	205	7	54	1,245	-
Colborne	120	137	690	578	-
Durham	324	258	1,205	1,540	-
Campbellton	541	763	2,330	1,379	-
Eldon Parish	50	74	490	407	-
St. Francis	208	6	121	1,069	-
Clair	123	7	32	855	-
St. Hilaire	176	15	26	1,535	-
Madawaska	140	2	10	974	-
Edmundton	287	39	249	1,463	-
St. Jacques	265	4	31	1,333	-
St. Basil	220	4	34	2,247	-
St. Anne	326	3	14	1,620	-
St. Leonard	299	26	147	1,845	-
St. Andrew	276	6	8	1,543	-
Lake Baker	139	7	15	938	-
TOTAL *	5,077	2,271	15,361	26,616	-

* Analysis includes major polling divisions. Total includes all polling divisions.

APPENDIX XX

Electoral Analysis of Westmorland, New Brunswick:

POLLING DIVISION	VOTES		ETHNIC ORIGIN		
	Lib.	Union	Brit.	French	Ger.
Shediac Parish	1,153	306	669	4,314	-
Dorchester	966	207	583	3,862	-
Salisbury	275	544	3,103	12	-
Moncton	727	700	3,522	2,175	437
Botsford	687	323	2,522	1,502	34
Sackville	748	607	3,086	408	3
Westmorland	360	302	1,632	134	9
TOTAL	6,480	4,846	25,621	17,081	727

APPENDIX XXI

Constituencies won by the Liberal party in the Maritimes:

DISTRICT	POPULATION	LIBERAL MAJORITY	ETHNIC ORIGIN		
			Brit.	French	Ger.
<u>I P.E.I.</u>					
Prince	32,779	Read, J. (324)	23,405	8,935	121
<u>II NOVA SCOTIA</u>					
Lunenburg	33,260	Duff, W. (838)	8,127	1,880	22,837
Antigonish & Guysborough	29,010	Sinclair, J.H. (1,438)	22,593	4,014	278
Cape Breton N. & Victoria	29,888	McKenzie, D.D. (828)	27,337	1,498	244
Iverness	25,571	Chisholm, A.W. (1,286)	20,063	4,860	-
<u>III NEW BRUNSWICK</u>					
Gloucester	32,662	Turgeon, O. (accl.)	4,775	27,732	-
Kent	24,376	Leger, A.T. (2,330)	6,598	17,436	-
Restigouche & Madawaska	43,909	Michaud, P. (2,806)	15,361	26,616	-
Westmorland	44,703	Copp, A.B. (1,743)	25,621	17,081	272

APPENDIX XXII

Constituencies in Maritimes in which Liberals won at least
40% of the civilian vote:

DISTRICT	POPULATION	ETHNIC ORIGIN			% OF CIVILIAN VOTE WON BY LIBERALS
		Brit.	French	Ger.	
<u>I NOVA SCOTIA</u>					
Cumberland	40,543	35,156	3,466	-	50.4%
Kings	21,780	19,279	188	1,412	42.%
Hants	19,703	17,440	237	1,356	51%
Picton	35,858	33,249	969	239	50.8%
Yarmouth	23,220	12,843	9,543	74	47%
Richmond & Cape Breton S.	66,625	52,201	9,628	562	41%
Digby & Annapolis	38,748	25,366	9,850	1,228	49%
<u>II NEW BRUNSWICK</u>					
Charlotte		20,124	244	107	48%
Northumberland		23,413	6,818	72	49%

APPENDIX XXIII

Number of Immigrant Arrivals in Canada

1911-1918.*

<u>Year</u>	<u>United Kingdom</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Total</u>
1911	123,013	121,451	66,620	311,084
1912	138,121	133,710	82,406	354,237
1913	150,542	139,009	112,881	402,432
1914	142,622	107,530	134,726	384,878
1915	43,276	59,779	41,734	144,789
1916	8,664	36,937	2,936	48,537
1917	8,282	61,389	5,703	75,374
1918	3,178	71,314	4,582	79,074

*Canadian Dominion Bureau of Statistics,
The Canada Year Book. 1918. 119.

APPENDIX XXIV

"PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE,

"OTTAWA, 27th December, 1916.

"Dear Sir:-

"With reference to our interview of this morning I repeat once more that the proposals for National Service are not connected with Conscription. Rather the idea was to make an appeal for voluntary National Service which would render unnecessary any resort to compulsion.

"You have asked for an assurance that under no circumstances will Conscription be undertaken or carried out. As I stated to you at our interview I must decline to give any such assurance. I hope that Conscription may not be necessary, but if it should prove the only effective method to preserve the existence of the State and of the institutions and liberties which we enjoy I should consider it necessary I should not hesitate to act accordingly.

"For your further information with regard to the purposes of National Service I enclose copies of the Order in Council under which the Director General and the Directors of National Service have been appointed.

"You have urged upon me the importance, and indeed the necessity, that the accumulated wealth of the country should bear its due proportion of contribution and sacrifice in this war. The Government have already accepted and acted on this principle. Any further proposals in that regard must be submitted to Parliament in the first instance after obtaining the sanction and approval of the Crown.

"The ranks of organized labour in Canada have made a splendid response during the past two and a half years to the call for service to the State. Many members of your organizations are fighting at the front and not a few have made the supreme sacrifice in the cause of liberty, humanity and civilization. The men at the front have the

right to feel that we in Canada are doing our utmost to aid and sustain them in their devoted efforts for that cause. This indeed is at once the inspiration and the ideal of National Service; that each shall do his part as best he can and to the greatest advantage of the State to which he owes allegiance.

"Yours faithfully,

"(Sgd.) R.L. BORDEN."

"Messrs. J.C. WATTERS, President,
"P.M. DRAPER, Secretary-Treasurer,
"JAMES SIMPSON, Vice-President,
"R.A. RIGG, M.P.P., Vice-President,
"Ottawa."

APPENDIX XXV

I Executive Council's position on Conscription

The measure is now law and, as such, contains provisions that impose heavy penalties upon all and sundry who make use of any form of opposition to the principle that might frustrate the carrying into effect of the Act now in existence. While the Congress cannot stultify itself to the degree of either withdrawing or contradicting this year its firm and carefully thought out views on the question of conscription, as embodied in the Resolutions of 1915 and 1916, still, under our representative form of Government, it is not deemed either right, patriotic or in the interests of the Dominion or of the Labor classes, to say or do ought that might prevent the powers that be from obtaining all the results that they anticipate from the enforcement of such law.

II The Farmillo suggested Amendment:

Moved by A. Farmillo, Edmonton: That all words after "existence" in the 13 line of the section of the Executive Council's report be deleted and the following substituted:

This Congress cannot stultify itself to the degree of either withdrawing or contradicting this year its firm and carefully thought out views on the question of Conscription as embodied in the Resolution of 1915 and 1916 neither has the Government, by its actions, justified us in recommending a willing submission to the Military Service Bill, particularly in view of the fact that up to the present they have not regarded the Conscription of wealth as being equally as important as the conscription of manpower in the successful prosecution of the war. We would all point out that no guarantees have been given that the enforcement of Conscription of manpower will not be used for the conscription of men for industrial purposes. With such fatal omissions this Congress regrets that it cannot unreservedly recommend to the wage workers of the Dominion that the law be observed, but on the other hand would recommend that every effort be made to force the complete conscription of wealth as an essential part of conscription for war purposes, and that pending the conscription of wealth no support be given to the principle of conscripting men for war purposes.

APPENDIX XXVI

PLATFORM OF PRINCIPLES

Free compulsory education.

Legal working day of eight hours, and six days to a week.

Government inspection of all industries.

The abolition of the contract system on all public works.

A minimum living wage, based on local conditions.

Public ownership of all franchises, such as railways, telegraph, telephones, water-works, lighting, etc.

Tax reform, by lessening taxation on industry and increasing it on land values.

Abolition of the Dominion Senate.

Exclusion of all Asiatics.

The Union Label to be placed on all manufactured goods, where Practicable, and all government and municipal supplies.

Abolition of child labor by children under sixteen years of age and the establishing of equal pay for equal work for men and women.

Abolition of property qualification for all public offices.

Voluntary arbitration of labor disputes.

Compulsory vote and proportional representation with grouped constituencies and abolition of municipal wards.

Direct legislation through the initiative and referendum.

Prohibition of prison labor in competition with free labor.

Equal suffrage for men and women over 21 years of age.

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Charlottetown Examiner	Liberal	P.A.C.*
Edmonton Bulletin	Liberal	P.A.C.
Free Lance (New Glasgow N.S.)	Conservative	P.A.C.
Grain Growers' Guide	Independent	McGill University
Halifax Herald	Conservative	P.A.C.
Industrial Banner (London)	Labor	D.L.L.**
Island Patriot (P.E.I.)	Liberal	P.A.C.
London Advertiser	Liberal	P.A.C.
London Free Press	Conservative	P.A.C.
Manitoba Free Press	Liberal	P.A.C.
Moniteur Acadien	Conservative	University of New Brunswick
Montreal Star	Conservative	Montreal Public Library
New Glasgow Evening News	Liberal	P.A.C.
Ottawa Citizen	Independent	P.A.C.
Ottawa Journal	Liberal	P.A.C.
St. John Daily Telegraph and Sun	Liberal	P.A.C.
St. John's Globe	Conservative	University of New Brunswick

*Public Archives of Canada

**Department of Labor Library

Toronto Globe	Liberal	McGill University
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Winnipeg Voice	Labor	D.L.L.
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