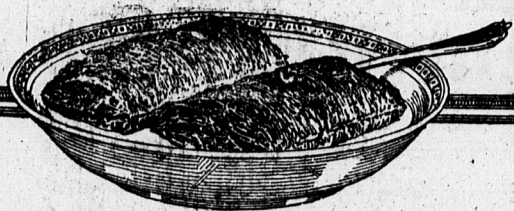


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GREAT SPEECH BY SIR T. WHITE

One of the Most Eloquent Orations Delivered in House of Commons Was Given by Sir Thomas White Who Pleaded to "Carry On" in Order to Complete Work of After-War Reconstruction.

The following is the speech of Sir Thomas White in the debate of the address in reply to the Government's speech in the House of Commons on March 8th. It is considered one of the ablest speeches delivered in the House for some time, and at the Caucus of the Unionists held subsequently, the Coalitionists endorsed his views and resolved to "carry on" with the prospect of ultimately becoming the great National Liberal Conservative Party.

Right Hon. Sir THOMAS WHITE (Ex-Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, when I retired from the Government in August last it was my intention for the reasons given in my letter of resignation, to resign my seat in this House. I refrained from doing so at the request of the right hon. the Prime Minister (Sir Robert Borden), and also of many prominent citizens of my constituency of both political parties. I am glad that I followed that course, because the retention of my seat affords me the opportunity of making answer to questions which arise touching the fiscal policy of the Government, the administration of the public finances during my period of office.

To those who have referred in terms of commendation to the part I took in the Administration I am deeply grateful. Some criticisms which have been passed in the course of this debate I shall deal with, I hope effectually, before I take my seat. While I am upon my feet I should like to speak, and I hope at not too great length, to the amendment which has been proposed by the hon. leader of the Opposition (Mr. Mackenzie King).

May I be permitted a personal digression? I was not in the House at the close of the last session, and consequently did not have the opportunity, which I now most earnestly desire, of extending my congratulations to my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Hon. Mackenzie King) upon his appointment to the eminent position of head of the Liberal party and its leader in this House. I do so with the greater pleasure because he and I have been old personal friends. Our friendship is of such long standing that I do not like to refer to it for fear it should appear that he and I are growing old. He is a graduate of the same university as I, and I think of the same year. His father was my predecessor in a man for whom in his lifetime I always cherished the highest esteem and regard, and whom I bear in my mind most affectionately.

While our political differences arising from the views which we hold, and doubtless will continue to hold on public questions, are not likely to be few or narrow, I assure the hon. leader of the Opposition of a goodly measure of my goodwill and interest in his future career.

Being solicitous as I am for his making a reasonable success in public life, I do not like to see him make initial mistakes. As age is reckoned in politics, my hon. friend is young—not too young. I consider it an advantage in a public man, no matter what position or how high that position may be, to be comparatively young because young men profit by their mistakes and old men never do. My hon. friend will recall the criticism which was passed upon the right hon. Mr. Gladstone, I think by Lord Salisbury. Lord Salisbury said that Mr. Gladstone was an old man in a hurry. There is some excuse for that and old men being in a hurry because he is near the end of his years politically and physically, but

the Parliament to deal with the national problems as they presented themselves. No, he continued to carry on till 1900. Similarly in the election of 1904 the issue was the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific railway. But after that was disposed of by the legislation of the first session of the Parliament that was then elected, the Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his Government continued to carry on until 1908 as they had a perfect right to do, and more than that, as, in my opinion, it was their bounden duty to do.

One reason for a five-year parliamentary term, a fairly lengthy period, is that the country may not continually experience the turmoil of general elections. There is nothing more disturbing to the trade, and industry, and tranquility of the country than general elections at too frequent intervals.

Yet the claim is made by some hon. gentlemen that this Parliament is not representative. I venture to say that the country is better represented in Canada than the present Parliament than the present one. Was there ever a general election in Canada in which the majorities were larger, or in which public opinion was more unmistakably placed before the people by the Prime Minister and those on this side of the House? So far, therefore, as the constitutional question is concerned we may dismiss it. There is no constitutional question involved. It is the duty of the Prime Minister and those on his side of the House to carry on in accordance with their mandate until such time as in the discretion and judgement of the Prime Minister, he feels it proper to advise His Excellency that there should be a dissolution, or until the Government sustains a defeat in this House.

It has been said that the Franchise Act was not fair legislation. I do not agree with that, but let us give that contention some weight. When I remember that supposing that not a single vote of the soldiers overseas had been polled the result would not have been essentially different. The individual majorities were too large to make a difference, they ran into the thousands where in ordinary times they would run into hundreds only. And even if you eliminate every woman's vote the result would have been the same. The fact is that at the last general election public opinion in Canada was overwhelming behind the determination of the Prime Minister, and the members of his Government, and the candidates throughout the country, to command the entire resources of the Dominion and place them be-



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hind our military effort overseas. There never was a more decisive result, and there never was a clearer mandate, and in that connection let me say this: That if any one with the problems arising out of the war. We have many of those

manifesto of the Prime Minister at the time of that election he will find that the mandate was not only for the war, but it was also to deal with the problems arising out of the war. We have many of those

problems with us today and we shall have them for years to come. I should consider that the Government had entirely misinterpreted

Continued on Page Eight

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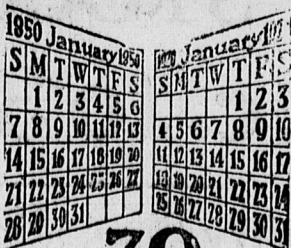
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Now that my hon. friend has become the subject of debate, I purpose, briefly to examine the case for an election at this time. Is there any duty or obligation resting upon the Government to ask for a dissolution of Parliament? What is the position? A little over two years ago there was an election in Canada and this Government was returned by one of the most decisive and overwhelming majorities in the history of the Dominion. There are three years of constitutional term yet unexpired. What has occurred to make the condition either in this House or in the country, that makes it an obligation upon this Government or upon the Prime Minister to ask His Excellency the Governor General to dissolve this Parliament and appeal to the country? This Government was elected, constitutionally speaking, in precisely the same manner as any other Government that has ever held power in Canada and no criticism can be directed at the Prime Minister if he continues to carry on, as I think it his bounden duty to carry on, so long as he can control a majority in this House, and I hope it will be shown decisively tomorrow night when the vote is taken that the Government is able, and will continue to be able, to command a majority of this House. I go farther, Mr. Speaker, and I say that if there were any danger that the vote of this House would bring about a dissolution, I would anticipate that some member of the New Government, in order that it might not occur. That is the difference between a make-believe lion of an amendment calling for a dissolution and a real lion of enforced dissolution.

It has been put forward that the Government has no mandate. I never was one of those who attached much importance to the question of a mandate, nor has much importance been attached to that subject by those who have been in charge of the Government of this country since Confederation. In every election, or nearly every election, there is a national issue upon which the public pronounce at the polls. Legislation dealing with the subject matter of the issue is usually introduced immediately by the new Government, but after such legislation has been dealt with, does any one seriously put forward the contention that the Government having exhausted its mandate, has again to appeal to the country in order to deal with the problems which arise during the balance of the period for which the Parliament was elected?

In 1878 the issue was the National Policy. Legislation was introduced early in 1879, and carried through Parliament, implementing the policy which has been approved by the people and Sir John A. Macdonald and his Government continued to carry on. He did not consider that because the National Policy question had been dealt with by a revision of the tariff, the mandate of the Government was exhausted and that he must go to the country for a fresh mandate.

In 1896 the two issues before the people were the Manitoba School Question and the Tariff, the first thing being the more important. Did the Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, after the Manitoba School Question was adjusted and after the Tariff had been revised, as it was by the then Minister of Finance, take the view, or would he have accepted the contention, that his mandate was exhausted, and that he was not to continue during the balance of the term of

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