

The People Speak

Monday's crop of by-elections proved a veritable rending of the tomb for the King Ministry and the Liberal Party. In different sections of the country former strongholds of Liberalism fell to anti-Government candidates of different stripes. The adverse majorities were of startling dimensions in every case, and made it crystal clear that the Canadian people have now cancelled their mandate of confidence in Mr. King and his party. Withdrawal of popular support on such a scale may not entail the immediate demise of the Government, but it means that it will survive only as a transient and embarrassed phantom of a Ministry, bereft of all real authority to speak for the country.

This situation is a well-deserved retribution for the devious courses of selfishness and chicanery followed by the leaders of the Liberal Party since the war began. The failure to form a National Government, lest a partisan monopoly of control of the nation's war effort be lost; the persistent evasion of an effective plan to mobilize the nation for total war; the hypocritical farce and wastage of the plebiscite and refusal to abide by its verdict; the disgraceful muddle in our manpower policy, and the reckless expenditures of public moneys on such bureaucratic monstrosities as the Wartime Information Board are all chapters in a sorry record which the voters now condemn.

For approach to the pit which is yawning before them the rank and file of Liberal Parliamentarians and servile Liberal organs must assume great blame, but the primary responsibility lies with their Leader, to whom they gave free rein to dominate their policies, and applauding support for all his mistakes. For his own and his party's undoing, Mr. King, intent mainly upon preserving the ascendancy of his party, went one better than Mary Shelley's hero in that he raised up two Frankensteins. He gave the C.C.F. Party the stimulus of victorious prestige by aiding and abetting it to defeat Mr. Meighen in the South York by-election, and now he sees flocking to its fold the industrial workers of Ontario and the graingrowers of the prairie country. He allowed, and even encouraged, his French-Canadian lieutenants to prepare a seed-bed of isolationist anti-British sentiment in Quebec, and the Bloc Populaire has now reaped the harvest of tares whose sowing began in the election of 1921. The scales of justice never stop working, and in the end they bring the balance true. A political strategy of double talk and double dealing may win temporary triumphs for a leader or a party, but sooner or later it will meet with its fitting punishment, and the truth of Barnum's famous saying about fooling the

people will be proved once more. The patience of Canadians with partisan selfishness and mismanagement of national interests is exhausted, and such of them as have had the opportunity have spoken with no uncertain voice of disapproval.

It would be easy and justifiable for newspapers and individuals who have criticized the policies of the King Government and foretold their inevitable consequences to sound the loud timbrel of triumph over the shortsighted zealots whose slavish partisanship has served their country ill, and brought their precious party into the widespread disrepute with the public which these by-elections prove. But these grave days are no time for exaltation over the discomfiture of the purblind and misguided who were ready to condone manifold errors and follies as long as party supremacy could be maintained.

The by-elections reveal not merely the unpopularity of the King Government, but a state of popular mental confusion and unrest, the natural fruit of the long absence of honest and vigorous leadership. Today thousands of bewildered voters are lending a sympathetic ear to the preachments of ambitious demagogues who plan a wholesale revolution of our economic and social system. Most of their radical proposals are unsuited to the genius of the Canadian people, and their implementation by legislation during the difficult days of postwar reconstruction could bring only hardship and calamity. But obviously the sands are running out for the discredited Liberal regime at Ottawa, and the Canadian people are bent upon finding other and better guides for their destinies.

Men and women of public spirit and honest purpose who care for the fate of their country must now turn to other political instruments, and contribute to their power and strength for the consummation of sane progressive reforms which will prove an effective antidote to the wild projects of the Socialists. If they will undertake this task with zeal, energy and imagination, they can rely upon the good sense of the people at large to accept and endorse a wise program of national betterment.

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