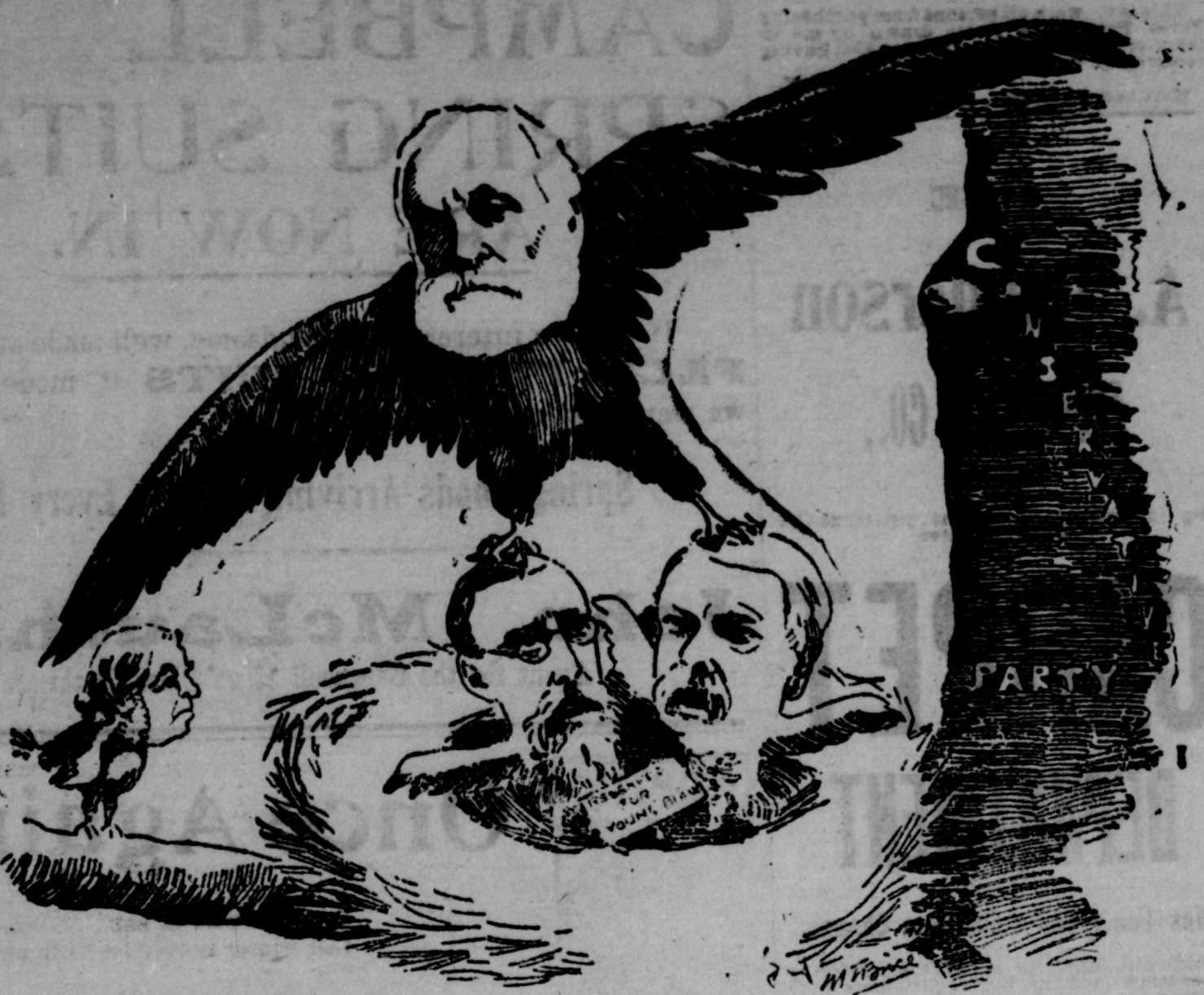


THE NEST OF TRAITORS DISTURBED IN THEIR EFFORTS TO HATCH A PLOT.



SIR MACKENZIE BOWELL—"Mr. Foster asked me if I did not think your blood was wanted at the head of the party. He must have meant Sir Charles Tupper."

The Nest of Traitors Episode.

What Sir Mackenzie Bowell said in the Senate.

(From Hansard.)
THE MINISTERIAL CRISIS OF 1896.

Hon. Sir Mackenzie Bowell—With the consent of the Senate, as we have had one ministerial explanation affecting the government, I would ask the indulgence of the Senate for a short time to deal with ministerial difficulties which occurred some years ago. It is with extreme reluctance that I crave the indulgence of the Senate for a short time, to enable me to call attention to certain statements which I learn through the public press and from other sources, have been made in the House of Commons relative to events which occurred in the years 1895 and 1896, known as the ministerial crisis of that period. It is unusual to revive and discuss ministerial explanations of this character which were fully laid before both branches of the legislature some nine years ago nor should I now were it not in self defence, but as statements have been made, and additional light pretended to be thrown upon those events, which directly and indirectly affect my honor as a public man, I must, therefore, be excused if I deal with them in a plain and unvarnished manner. As a result of the statements to which I have referred I find in the *Sun* of St. John, N.B., a letter written by its Ottawa correspondent, of date February 12, commenting upon the debate in parliament, the following paragraph, which renders an explanation from me absolutely necessary, unless I were content to allow the misrepresentations to become record of parliament, without explanation or denial, which I do not propose to do. The correspondent says:—

The facts that the resignation of the famous seven was preceded by the resignations of Messrs Quimet and Caron; that Sir Charles Tupper sailed from England, not actuated by ambitions of his own and not induced by the machinations of conspirators

in the cabinet, but at the request of Sir Mackenzie Bowell himself; that Sir Mackenzie Bowell entered into an agreement with his colleagues to resign in Sir Charles' favor, and that his failure to keep that agreement after Sir Charles' arrival, though he must have known his retention of office was killing the Conservative party, forced his colleagues, with whom the agreement was made, to resign as the only way of making him keep it.

I should have called attention to these statements at an earlier date had my colleague, the Hon Mr. Ferguson, who was a member of the cabinet at that time, been present. As he is not likely, owing to a snow blockade, to be here for some time, I do not deem it proper to delay explanation any longer.

I see it is reported that a debate took place in the House of Commons on the 10th of this month, in which the Hon Sir William Mulock, Postmaster General, the Hon George E. Foster, the Hon John Haggart, and Mr. George Taylor took part. With the exchange of doubtful compliments between these gentlemen I have nothing to do, but I cannot allow the statements made by the latter three gentlemen to pass without calling attention to them and placing upon record a distinct and positive denial of many of them. The discussion to which I refer arose out of a charge made by the Hon Sir William Mulock, that the Hon Geo. E. Foster with others had in 1896 played traitors to their chief, the premier of Canada at that time, and that the premier had denounced them as a 'nest of traitors.' To justify the course then pursued by what are now known as the 'bolters,' Mr. Foster declared he was justified in resigning on account of a difference of opinion on the policy of the government. Mr. Haggart justified his and Mr. Foster's action upon that occasion on account of an alleged violation of promises which he says

were made by myself, and not fulfilled, which Mr. Taylor, to a limited extent, attempted to confirm, not one word of which, as I shall show before sitting down, is correct, or, in plainer language, true. It is difficult to understand why such statements were made after a lapse of nine years, unless believing the events of 1896-97 were forgotten, or that the great majority of those who were addressed knew nothing whatever of the facts, therefore their hearers could be the more easily misled and deceived.

Had Mr. Foster confined his explanations of why he and his fellow bolters left the government to that given in the House of Commons on the 10th day of January, 1898, I should never have deemed it worthy of further notice, but when he gave other and incorrect reasons, it becomes my duty, not only to call attention to them, but to prove out of his own mouth and from his own utterances that he had little regard when making his last explanation for facts as they appear upon the record. When he told the people of Toronto at the last Dominion election that he left the government on account of differences of opinions on questions of policy, and that His Excellency the Governor General, knowing the facts, called them back into the government, he knew he was telling what was not correct. I have in my hand copies of the report of speeches delivered by him in Toronto during the last Dominion election as reported in the *Globe*, the *News* and *Mail*, in which I find, that he in reply to questions put to him, said among other things, 'when asked why he left the government,' that he did not propose to answer the question that belonging to the Privy Council, and that his mouth was shut, but added that on all points of importance they must have a union of ideas, and that any one disagree-

ing must resign. That he said was all they had done. Continuing, he said, 'when a member of the cabinet or members disagreed with their leader they had done as they were bound on their honor to do—resigned.' In another speech he said 'the Governor had been quite satisfied with the reasons for the resignation of six ministers on a question of policy, and had shown his confidence in them by reappointing them later.' That did not satisfy his hearers, one of whom exclaimed 'that still leaves the question unanswered.' 'Why did you resign?' To which Mr. Foster replied 'I don't intend to answer. I am not at liberty to reveal the secrets of the Privy Council. An ingenious way of evading an answer. The fact is the reason given in the House of Commons for his resigning were never discussed in the Privy Council before he resigned, therefore, he had no oath to respect in that particular. He had, however, the consent of the Governor General to make a statement from his seat in the Commons giving his reasons for leaving the cabinet, which reasons were read from a carefully prepared typewritten document, the result of a conference, after mature deliberation with those with whom he was acting, in that carefully prepared document, there is not a single word in that explanation about a divergence of opinion on questions of policy, on the contrary, he declared for himself and his colleagues that there was no divergence of opinion on questions of policy, that in fact they were all a unit upon that point. His and their reasons, you will observe, when I read from the official record were solely of a personal character and not one of policy.

Before referring to similar statements repeated in the House of Commons by Mr. Foster I deem it but right in self justification, to lay before the Senate the fact that friends of the Conservative party in the north riding of Toronto, finding it difficult to rally a number of them to the polls on account of the events of 1896-97, and the part played therein by Mr. Foster wrote urging me to send letters which could be read in support of his candidature, which I declined to do, giving my reasons therefore in the following letter which, I may add, was not published:—

Bellefleur, October 28th, 1904.

My Dear Sir,—I owe you an apology for not replying to your letter at an earlier date. The fact is I was out of the city when it arrived but was reminded of its existence on receipt of your telegram. If you will take the trouble to read the reports of Foster's speeches as they appear in the *Globe*, *News* and *Mail*, I do not think you will ask me to write any such letter as suggested by you.

His answers to questions are absolutely untrue. He told the audience that there were differences of opinion in the cabinet upon questions of policy which led to his and his colleagues' resignation. This is not the fact. The reasons given by him in the Commons in justification of his action make no mention of differences of opinion upon questions of policy. The best evidence of which and of the untruthfulness of his statement is found in the fact that he and his fellow conspirators were to come back into the fold without any stipulation as to change of policy.

His dragging the Governor General's name into the discussion is most unwarrantable, knowing as he did, that the Governor General acted solely on my advice. I have no desire, however, to enter into a controversy upon this subject.

I humiliated myself quite enough by taking them back. It was done in what I considered the interest of the party then, and have regretted it ever since. I do not propose to repeat it by writing such a letter as you suggest. I may be all he and his chums say I am, but I have not yet lost self respect.

I am content to let him alone to fight his own battles but decline further to demean myself by asking my friends to put confidence in him which I do not entertain myself. You will pardon my writing this plainly. I do so, believing it best to be frank with friends.

Yours sincerely,
MACKENZIE BOWELL.
Not satisfied with excusing his resignation on the question of policy in Toronto, when addressing the electors, he became bolder when replying to the charges hurled at him by Sir William Mulock of being a 'traitor.' He exclaimed:—

Am I not to be allowed to leave the government if I differ from it on points of policy or principle? Is a man to be branded as no gentleman because, differing from what is the policy and principle of his government he leaves it?

Again:—
At whatever time a member of the government feels that he is out of accord with his premier and the government of which he is a member on points of policy or administration, he has a perfect right to send in his resignation.
(To be continued.)

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