

ISSUES IN THE ALBERTA FIGHT

Government's Record of Progressive Legislation

FOREIGN-BORN VOTE CRY

Germans and Austrians Not So Numerous as Some Assert—Immigrants of Late Years From the United States.

(Special Correspondence of The Globe.)
Edmonton, May 29.—It is rather a unique tribute to the Sifton Government in Alberta that the Conservative Opposition in that Province seems content to make its chief issue in the present election campaign out of the foreign voter. While some Conservative papers and speakers in Alberta make much ado about the presence of a few naturalized Austro-Hungarian and German people in the electorate of their Province, Premier Sifton and his followers, one of the chief of whom on this occasion is Mrs. Nellie McClung of Edmonton, talk about the long program of progressive legislation which the present Government has adopted, and at the same time outline plans for future development. The attitude of the critics and opponents of the Sifton Administration in this campaign in urging the disfranchisement of a small foreign-born element within the Province, in addition to being an indirect compliment to the Government, is too closely related to a question of Federal jurisdiction to be either courageously independent of direction from Ottawa or wisely opportune in a purely patriotic sense.

How the Parties Stand.

The last Provincial election in Alberta was held in April, 1913, and resulted in the Sifton Government being returned to power with thirty-eight out of fifty-six seats in the Legislature. As the result of a redistribution last year, there are now fifty-eight constituencies to be represented in the Alberta House. In addition, a special representation is being given to the soldiers who enlisted in Alberta and have gone overseas. This will make, altogether, a total of sixty seats in the next Legislature. At its last session, however, the Legislature decided unanimously to permit twelve of its members on active service overseas to have their seats at this election by acclamation. One of those members, Joseph Stauffer, Deputy Speaker, has since been killed in France, and, therefore, only eleven of these men are left to enjoy the compliment extended to them by their friends at home. Of the eleven Alberta members serving their King and country overseas, six are Liberals and five are Conservatives.

In the present campaign, which will come to an end with polling day on June 7, strong independent elements have found expression for the first time in the political history of Alberta. In Calgary, for instance, where three seats are being contested, two Independent Labor candidates are in the running. The Farmers' Non-partisan League, which has been flourishing in Saskatchewan and Alberta during the past six months, has five candidates in the field in different rural parts of the Province. The Labor and Socialistic elements in Alberta are strong owing to the presence in the Province of so many coal miners, and it would not be surprising to see a fairly strong representation of these radical minds in the next Legislature.

Women Will Vote.

This will also be the first Provincial election in which the women of Alberta will have the opportunity of exercising their franchise. Judging from the support which Mr. Sifton is receiving from the leaders of the women's organizations, the female vote will be polled largely in favor of the Liberal cause and the present Government. This support, however, is being given only in return for services rendered. At the last session of the Legislature the Sifton Government put into effect one of the most comprehensive and progressive programs of legislation ever enacted into law in a single session by any Province in the Dominion. Fifty-six bills were introduced and passed, and many of them contained recommendations which had been advanced by the organized women voters of the Province. The liquor act, which came into force in Alberta on the 1st of July last year, prohibiting the sale in hotels or public places of all kinds of intoxicants, was amended this year, in response to the demands of the women, making more stringent the regulation of the quantity of liquor which might be imported by any resident of the Province. In the municipal hospital act, which was probably the most advanced piece of social legislation ever placed on the statute books of any Province in Canada, the Government again listened to the advice of the female voter. An act providing for strict medical inspection in rural schools also had its birth in the fertile brains of the female electorate. The dower act also bore the approval of Alberta's women folk. It gave women an inalienable right in the home properties which they occupy in common with their husbands. In another act the women were given full suffrage rights in connection with all municipal and school elections, and wherever their husbands were assessed they were also given the right to vote on money by-laws in common with their husbands. These are some of the reasons why the women of Alberta will vote for the return of Mr. Sifton to power at Edmonton.

Some Recent Legislation.

Other legislation which the Sifton Government is presenting to the people of Alberta as a plea for re-election relates to the agricultural interests of the Province. Three important rural credit bills were passed at the last session of the Legislature largely as a result of the continued demand of the United Farmers of Alberta. These three bills provided, respectively, for improved facilities for securing long-term mortgage loans, current loans and special live stock loans. The agricultural interests were further protected and encouraged by such legislation as the seed grain act, the wolf bounty act, the enrollment of stallions act, the reclamation of land act, an act to permit the Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company to amalgamate with the Grain Growers' Grain Company of Winnipeg, and an act to extend the credit of the Province to the Municipal Co-operative Hail Insurance Company.

Armed with a legislative record

that has few precedents, and openly approved by the organized agricultural interests, the Sifton Government is waging its side of this campaign with a great deal of confidence in the outcome. The efforts of the Opposition to make capital out of a dangerous racial issue do not meet with much response. The majority of responsible people in Alberta know that the naturalized Germans and Austrians who have lived in the Province are law-abiding people, and most of them are Canadian in their general political outlook. At any rate, it is known that out of a total population in the Province of Alberta, according to the recent census, of 496,525, there are not more than 83,000 Austrians and Germans—men, women and children. In 1911 the census showed that the proportion of Austro-Hungarians and Germans in the population of Alberta was less than eighteen per cent., and in five years the large increase in the population of that Province has not come from Europe, but from the United States. Fortunately for the national welfare, Alberta, through its schools, is making good citizens out of its foreign settlers, and if relieved of the vicious attacks of indiscreet jingoes and irresponsible political partisans, the Government of Alberta will continue to do its part in making Western Canada a good country to live in.