

GUTHRIE STANDS FOR UNION GOVT.

Win the War First, He Says, Let Other Matters Wait Till Afterwards

HIS ADDRESS IN GUELPH

Censures Quebec's Slowness in Recruiting—Defends His Own Record in Parliament.

(Staff Correspondence of The Globe.)

Guelph, Oct. 2.—"People tell me I have turned my political coat," declared Mr. Hugh Guthrie, M.P., addressing a big meeting of citizens at the Guelph City Hall to-night. "I haven't turned my political coat—I have taken it off altogether, and I intend to keep it off till after the war."

Mr. Guthrie concluded his two-hour address by reading a statement as to his position. He had not changed his Liberal principles, but believed in the formation of a Union and a National War Government, either before or after the coming general election, and if himself elected and such a Government was formed he was prepared to give it his "hearty and whole-souled support."

An Open Meeting.

It was originally intended that the meeting should be a meeting of Liberals, but in view of the fact that he had called it upon his own initiative and responsibility, Mr. Guthrie stated that he had deferred to the wishes of many and made it an open public meeting. Members of the Liberal Executive of the riding accepted this view, and took no part in the proceedings at the meeting.

Dr. A. Hobbs, who was chosen Chairman on behalf of Mr. Guthrie, invited commendation, criticism or questions, but none were forthcoming.

Censure of Quebec Applauded.

The meeting was an exceptionally big one. The hall was crowded to capacity, and many ladies were present. The applause which greeted Mr. Guthrie's declarations was repeated and hearty. The two most striking outbursts were those which marked his references to the failure of the Province of Quebec to do its share in recruiting, and his declaration that no vote of his would at this time place the Canadian ballot in the hands of 35,000 native-born enemies who had been naturalized.

Resents Charge of Disloyal Conduct.

Mr. Guthrie said that he warmly resented the criticism of certain constituents that he had been disloyally "cracking the old Chief over the head." There was no man in Canada whom he held in higher respect than Sir Wilfrid Laurier. "I respect him and I love him," he declared, "though I think he is mistaken in his opposition to conscription." Neither had he said that Liberals were slackers and dynamiters and soap-box orators. "What I said was that upon this issue all the slackers, the French-Canadians and the English-speaking slackers, the soap-box orators and the dynamiters would vote for the official Liberal party." He had asked his hearers on which side the Kaiser would vote, and had advised them that they would be safe to vote on the opposite side.

Objects to Globe's Criticisms.

Mr. Guthrie maintained that The Globe's criticism of his position in connection with his votes and actions on the Canadian Northern and franchise bills had not represented him rightly or justly. "When The Globe makes charges against me," he observed, "it creates a tremendous stir, because The Globe is held in high respect in this constituency." The Globe's articles concerning him in connection with the Canadian Northern bill were, he maintained, "an entire misapprehension of my attitude regarding the taking over of the Canadian Northern system."

Criticizes Both Leaders' Actions.

Describing the original negotiations between Sir Robert Borden and Sir Wilfrid Laurier for coalition, Mr. Guthrie said he believed the Premier was wrong in not proposing union at the beginning of the war. "I don't defend him for that; the blame must rest on his shoulders, but we cannot stop to review the mistakes of the past. We must take the situation as we find it. I think Sir Wilfrid by accepting the Premier's offer, even if belated, would have done the noble and the patriotic thing, which would have been well for his own party and the people of Canada."

How the Break Came.

Mr. Guthrie said that when, on the second reading of the conscription bill Sir Wilfrid Laurier came out in favor of a referendum, he parted from his leader and spoke his convictions in the House. He analyzed the vote on the third reading to show that of the fifty-five members who opposed conscription, forty-five were from the Province of Quebec, two from French constituencies in Ontario, and two from French constituencies in New Brunswick. There were only six members from English-speaking ridings in the whole of Canada who voted against conscription.

C.N.R. Legislation.

As to his record on the Canadian Northern legislation, The Globe, he thought, was responsible for the misapprehension of his position. In 1914 he had supported all the Liberal amendments to the Government legislation at that time, and this session he had supported the amendment of Hon. George P. Graham before approving the principle of the bill.

Mr. Guthrie said there were men in his riding who had been "contemptible enough to insinuate that he had voted through the Canadian Northern for a consideration, and that he had voted in favor of the C.P.R. acquiring it for a consideration." Both insinuations he emphatically denied.

Dealing with his support of the franchise act and of closure to carry it through, Mr. Guthrie said it was not a disfranchising bill so far as women were concerned. Women had never had the vote. It gave the female next of kin of the overseas soldiers the right to represent them at the Canadian polls. As for the disfranchisement of naturalized Germans, Austrians, Bulgarians and Turks, Mr. Guthrie declared he did right in supporting the measure for a war-time election.

"Many of these alien enemies came to this new world," said he, "as part of the German policy of world conquest, so that Germany might have friends here when she needed them. Pieces of paper in the shape of naturalization will not make good Britishers of them."

Conscription of Wealth Difficult.

Touching the question of conscription of wealth, upon which Mr. Guthrie said he was subjected to much criticism, he reminded his constituents that he had supported the Graham resolution calling for the or-

ganization and conscription of wealth and resources. At the present time they had a big tax on business, and he did not believe in taxing industry. He agreed that the Government "might have gone further in the taxation of big incomes," but when he had asked Sir Thomas White why he had not done this, the Finance Minister replied that just so soon as wealth was taxed highly the rich men would buy war bonds to escape taxation. If taxation were in turn placed upon war bonds, they would go down in price, and Canada's credit would be destroyed in the markets of the world. "There is no more popular cry than the conscription of wealth," said Mr. Guthrie, "but when you come to work it out it is a very difficult problem."

Will Support Union Government.

In concluding, Mr. Guthrie declared that, in order to prevent further misunderstanding, he proposed to read the meeting a statement of his position. It was as follows:—

"And now a word with reference to the position which I intend to take, if I am again returned to Parliament, in respect of measures pertaining to the present war. I intend to give whole-hearted and unqualified support to any Government which may be formed, and which will undertake to prosecute the war to the full extent of Canada's power, in men, money and resources. It matters not to me whether such a Government is called coalition, union or national. I believe in a union at the present time of all political forces for the prosecution of the war, irrespective of all political parties. It is united action which is needed at the present time, and matters of mere party politics should be buried until victory is won."

Not a Party Man at Present.

"In the past I have been looked upon as a strong party man, but since May last I have publicly and privately advocated a cessation of party strife, and I intend to continue in this course until the end of the war. I do not know whether a union Government will be formed by Sir Robert Borden at the present time or after the general election, if he be returned to power. I am certain from the public statements which the Prime Minister has made that it is his intention to form a union Government of the best men available, either now or later on, and if a union Government is formed, and I am returned to Parliament for this riding, I shall give it my utmost support."

Other Questions Should Wait.

"It must not, however, be supposed that by pursuing this course I have changed my Liberal principles. I have not done so. Liberal principles which I have advocated for many years past I still adhere to, but in my judgment all political questions which are now before the public must take a secondary place to the one supreme question of Canada's participation in the war to the fullest extent. I place this first and foremost in the political situation in Canada to-day, and I believe that whatever shall be required of Canada in connection with the war and which is within Canada's power to do should be done, and the other matters of great importance, under normal conditions, must wait until some future time for adjustment."

"Win the war first, and fight our political battles afterwards, is the basic principle upon which my political action shall be framed until the war is over; and the most desirable thing at the present moment, in my judgment, in the political affairs of this country is a union Government, and if such a Government is formed I shall certainly support it to the utmost of my ability."

Following the conclusion of Mr. Guthrie's address opportunity was again given the audience to speak or ask questions. The invitation was not accepted. The meeting then broke up with cheers for the King, the Canadian troops and Mr. Guthrie.