

OUR COUNTRY FIRST:

To the Editor of the Free Press

Sir,—In the distance we can now hear the rumble of the approaching storm which must increase in volume as it moves from west to east, until it wakes our rulers slumbering peacefully at Ottawa and brings them face to face with the country's peril and their duty. Can it be that they are so ill-advised by their party followers that they know nothing of the strong undercurrent of public feeling which will soon rise in a whirlpool to swallow up all those who put their party before the good of the nation.

Those in power must surely see that party lines are growing thin, and wide breaks will occur unless the will of the people as a whole, stirred by the war spirit and the sacrifices they have made, is taken into consideration and respected, while the advice of political partisans is disregarded.

The next election will not be won by any machine but by public opinion and whoever wins it will do so by trimming their sails so as to take advantage of the wind that will lead them into the harbor of the nation's good, and all other considerations must be cast overboard. Whether the government will recognize the truth of the position or not I do not know, but there is no doubt that, with the whole manhood of the country registered for national service, we should have a national government, and here I would quote the words used by Lloyd George in his first speech as premier in the house of commons:

"If, in this war I have paid scant heed to the call of party, and so I have—although I have been as strong a party man as any in the house—if I have not done it during this war it is because I realized from the moment the Prussian cannon hurled death at a peaceable and inoffensive little country, that a challenge had been sent to civilization to decide an issue higher than party, deeper than party, wider than all parties, an issue upon the settlement of which will depend the fate of men in this world for generations when existing parties will have fallen like dead leaves on the highway; these issues are the issues that I want to keep in front of the nation so that we shall not falter or faint in our resolves."

I cannot conclude without paying tribute to the strong stand taken by Mr. Norris in regard to traitors in our midst and enemy aliens. It is inspiring when a man of Mr. Norris' position casts off the net of party politics and speaks his mind boldly for the good of his country. It places him far above the political vote-catchers and shows he is moving up the steps of statesmanship. I venture to predict that his long ring in the ears of the loyal people of this province and that he will receive support in the future that he little dreams of now.

F. H. B.

Winnipeg, Jan. 18.