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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Interest Stirs In Kings Voting

[byline not printed]

POLITICAL INTEREST was stirred in Kings County when it became known that Mrs. John A. MacDonald will offer as a candidate for the Progressive Conservatives when the nominating convention is held next week.

The Liberal candidate, Tom Kickham, a former MP, was named last year and Maritime Organizer Wilfred Inman told me yesterday the New Party will run a candidate if they can find a suitable man to offer. Mr. Inman and Carl Hamilton, executive secretary from Ottawa, are looking into the possibilities during their current visit to the province.

The announcement of Mrs. MacDonald's intention and the suggestion of a New Party candidate stimulated interest in the coming battle.

I DIDN'T join in the tributes that were paid to John A. MacDonald, the former Kings MP, at the time of his death, because I didn't think that sort of thing fitted in this column. But now that his wife is nominating- and she told me yesterday that she is serious about it- I want to say that John A. Was one of my warmest and closest friends for many years. I enjoyed a half-hour visit with him in December.

When I was an MP I always liked to have someone drop into the office for a friendly chat. It relieved the pressure of political business that can become strenuous at times. That was the idea I had when I dropped in for a visit at his Cardigan store only a few weeks before his death. Little did we realize that we were having our last chat but I was glad that I had taken the time to visit, after I heard of his sudden passing.

Follow In Husband's Footsteps

"MY AMBITION", Mrs. MacDonald told me yesterday, "is to carry on the way my husband did, if I should be elected". There are many who will agree she is on the right track.

Possibility of a three-way fight in Kings injects uncertainty into the outcome. A New Party candidate would probably hurt the Liberals more than the PCs. I'm basing that on the old feeling that a third party effort will split the opposition that always develops against a party in power. It might drain off some of the opposition to the PCs this time, and that could mean the difference in a close fight.

I'M NOT disparaging the New Party in this reference. But I think it's too soon for them to build up whatever strength they may develop here and challenge for victory.

But don't sell the new group short. They're in dead earnest. "We're going into this with the idea of eventually having the government of this province", Mr. Inman told me yesterday. Having known him for a long time, I feel he means it.

Inman's Parents Prominent Liberals

IF YOU think it's a switch for the Inmans, you're right. Wilfred Inman's father, G.S.Inman was a Liberal MLA for 4th Queens back in the Twenties when he served in the Saunders cabinet and was acting premier for a time. He was later appointed judge of the Count Court.

His mother, Senator F. Elsie Inman, is a former president of the P.E.I. Women's Liberal Club and a long time party supporter. His explanation: "I'm looking for something in government administration that is good for the country and the average person. I don't find it in either of the two old parties."

He says he has found other people from the old parties who suggest the same thing.

I checked up this week on the kind of support the New Party may expect from labor here. With Canadian Labor Congress backing, they should expect some labor backing. People closely identified with labor organizations gave me honest opinions.

Labor Asked To Comment

REACTIONS RAN from the feeling that the New Party would get a considerable measure of labor backing as a matter of right because it is CLC backed, to a feeling that labor would take a close look at party policies before endorsing it. I'm convinced both views were completely honest, despite the wide disparity

Strong adherence on P.E.I. to Liberal or Conservative traditions is perhaps the biggest hurdle any new group faces.

A prominent farmer, himself a strong party supporter, reminded me of the feeling that "for most P.E.I. people their first loyalty is to their party, the second is to their wives and the third is to their church". It's an exaggeration, of course, but it illustrates the handicap any third party faces here.

I GET the impression the new group is going to draw more support here than the old CCF ever did. But my crystal ball doesn't tell me how much more.

I was interested to hear yesterday from Mr. Hamilton that Premier Tommy Douglas of Saskatchewan is almost a sure bet to be a candidate for New Party leadership. Most people I talk to here think he would have more appeal than Hazen Argue, the Assiniboia MP who is CCF leader. Knowing Mr. Argue as I do though, I'm sure he'll put up a tremendous fight for the leadership.

Potato Production Costs Increase

POTATO PRODUCTION costs have jumped 300 percent in the last 38 years, I find after comparing 1923 figures to the present. It cost \$86 to produce an average 200 bushels an acre then, I found when I was looking up a storm story in an old file last week. E.D.Reid, a grower and shipper, says it costs \$250 now. Seed costs then were \$1.00 a bushel, the story indicated.

S.C.Wright, deputy minister of agriculture, puts average production at 272 bushels, after checking estimates for the past ten years. High for the period was 310 bushels in

1967 and the low was 200 in 1951. Yields run much higher than that, of course for top growers but these were estimated average yields for the province.

HERE ARE some of the itemized production costs today with the 1923 figures in brackets. Fertilizer \$55 (\$23-28); spraying \$30 (\$13.78); digging \$40 (\$10); planting \$6 (\$1.25 for horse and man); machinery \$50 (\$3.00); Total cultivation costs run to more than \$40 now. It was \$6.50 in 1923.

It was back around 1919 or 1920, I think, that potatoes soared one spring to \$3.25 a bushel and that was really big money then. Horace Willis recalled yesterday that his father was shipping the old long blue potatoes "and they were long". He was only a little chap then but he was carrying them out of the cellar in his arms "like sticks of wood". Some were bad at one end, but his father cut the bad part off and sold the rest. Marketing was not so difficult in those days.

Refused To Sell Spuds At \$3.25

BEST STORY I heard about that period concerns the Prince County man who had three carloads when the peak price hit. But he refused to sell at \$3.25. He thought they would hit \$4.00. The price dropped quickly and the man sold for something like 40 cents a bushel.

Most people will recall that the price soared again back about 1956 to \$4.25 per bag which runs about \$3.30 per bushel. But money was worth at least twice as much back in 1923, so you can realize the tremendous impact the price had on the farm economy that spring. Spuds were dug out of the cellar and sold to the last one. It didn't take much of a load to make \$100. And that was a whole lot of dough in those days.