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France Now in Hands of Old Professionals

Paris.—Canadian interest in European politics is as dead as a bucket of ashes. There are plenty of politics in Canada, and the good Canadian is sick of old-world tangles that are merely older and dirtier than the Dominion product. But all people who were in the war are interested in the inside reason for the turn of events that has cost France the sympathy of the world.

When the armistice came, France occupied the strongest moral position any country could hold. People spoke of “The soul of France.” France was immaculate. And then came the peace conference of Versailles.

The world condoned the French attitude at the peace conference because the war was so recent and France had suffered so much that it seemed natural for her to make an unjust, conqueror’s peace. It was Clemenceau’s peace, his last tigerish move, for now Clemenceau is the deadest name in France. But it was an understandable peace, with the war so recent, and a forgivable peace.

Now the Versailles peace is a long time back, the war is over. Germany is making an earnest effort to build up her country to pay the money she owes the Allies and England is trying to help Germany that she may be able to pay. It is to France’s interest to see that Germany has a chance to pay, and she must see that the economic recovery of Germany is necessary if Europe is ever to get back to normal. But France keeps an enormous standing army, rattles the saber against Germany, destroys the effect of the Washington limitation of armament conference by adopting a Prussian attitude about submarines and talks of the next war.

Nobody that had anything to do with this war wants to talk about another war. Least of all should France want there to be a “next war.” The French people do not want any war. But, at present, the French people do not happen to be in control of the French government. That is the secret of the whole thing.

The present Chamber of Deputies, which corresponds to the Dominion Parliament, was elected in the year after the war, and the majority is held by the old reactionary party. They believe that they can get all the money they wish out of Germany if they only threaten her enough and cannot see that they will only produce utter bankruptcy and get nothing. They are the ones who want to go on and occupy the Ruhr basin, not realizing that the occupation would cost more money than she could get from the mines. They are too old to learn new things and they no longer represent the people who elected them.

Those old-line politicians were not satisfied with Premier Briand. He was too gentle, and he was fooling with that terrible thing, Russia. So they forced his resignation. Briand was not liberal enough for the Allies and the United States, but that made no difference. He was forced out and Poincare made premier.

Now Poincare and the blindest of the reactionaries are in the saddle and riding for all they are worth. But the ride will not be long, and it will be their last ride for a long time. It is the thin

majority of the present chamber, coupled with the stupidest of the professional politicians that are giving the world the impression it is getting of France at present. It is a slim majority, and the next election will wipe it out; then France will resume her place as a nation with the good of herself and the world at heart, and cease to be a military power run by an irascible lot of old gentlemen.

For the French people have been thinking and working while their politicians have been talking. If they hadn't been working so hard (unemployment has almost vanished in France) they would have kicked the present Chamber of Deputies out long before this.