

The Gazette



Rival Candidates at Huntingdon

Huntingdon Election Vote Today To Determine By-election Choice

One of the quietest, cleanest and shortest by-election campaigns in many years of Quebec political history comes to an end today with the 7,000 electors of Huntingdon going to the polls to chose a member for the Legislative Assembly.

The campaigning features only two candidates, John Gillis Rennie, National Union, and Mrs. Mae L. O'Connor, Liberal. Political observers feel that, while the result will be close, the government standard-bearer will wind up on top.

Most observers base their opinion on the fact that the National Union government is riding on its luck, with four straight by-elections tucked under its belt, and the belief that Huntingdon voters will feel that it pays to be on the Government side, until the next general election anyway.

This by-election, the fifth since Premier Duplessis came to power in 1944, marks a turning point in the political annals of Quebec because it is the first time that a woman has been a candidate in a provincial contest.

The Huntingdon election is the first since 1944 in which the National Union and the Liberal party are fighting a straight contest with no third candidate interfering. This will help to indicate the relative strength of the two parties.

Huntingdon is one of the smallest ridings in the province with the electors numbering slightly more than 7,000, about evenly divided between French and English elements as to racial extraction. It is essentially rural with its three main towns, Huntingdon, Hemmingford and St. Anicet, having less than 4,000 population.

There are several small industries, employing a total of about 700, most of them textile workers. Observers will keep an eye on the polls where they vote to see the average worker's reaction to the drastic measures taken by the Provincial Government in the Valleyfield and Lachute strikes. The Liberals are counting on a solid vote from this area and some believe

that these votes will swing the balance in favor of Mrs. O'Connor.

Mrs. O'Connor has been making a personal campaign, leaving the discussion of political topics to party leaders. She has been appealing to women especially, and to those who sent her late husband, Dennis J. O'Connor, to the Assembly on two consecutive occasions before his death last autumn.

While considered a Liberal stronghold, Huntingdon swung on two occasions in recent years when the late Hon. Martin Fisher, one-time Provincial Treasurer in the first Duplessis Government, represented the riding from 1930 to 1931, defeating twice the late Hon. Gordon W. Scott, Provincial Treasurer in the Taschereau administration.

This has given hope to the National Union which is counting on the personal qualifications of Mr. Rennie, a major who served overseas in the last World War, whose family has resided in the constituency for more than 125 years. Mr. Rennie is at present living in Westmount, however, and the Liberals have been using this as an argument in favor of Mrs. O'Connor whose residence is at Huntingdon.

The Liberals have been making a special appeal to women and several of them have taken part in political rallies. Only one woman has spoken in favor of Mr. Rennie.

A fifth straight win for the Government would give Liberal dissenters the chance they have been waiting for to call for a general reorganization of the party. The loss of one more seat would give Premier Duplessis that much more confidence that the people of Quebec are behind him in his stand against the financial proposals of the Liberal administration at Ottawa.

For the National Union, a victory in Huntingdon would give Premier Duplessis a chance to do one of two things he is believed to want: Call a general election early next year before the end of his mandate in 1949 or have a by-election in Montreal-St. Louis, the seat that was left open last spring when Maurice Hartt, K.C., resigned to be the successful candidate in the Federal by-election in Montreal-Cartier.