

# **Sifton Creates Deplorable Scene in House; Refuses to Suppress Pro-German Press**

**Premier and Members of Cabinet Lose Control of Tempers  
After Themselves Starting Heated Discussion in  
Assembly and Attempt to Shirk Responsibility  
for Failure to Suppress Publication  
of Alberta Herald**

The dying moments of the legislative session which closed yesterday afternoon brought with them thrilling incidents, arising out of the publication of pro-German literature, which have not been equalled in intensity in the assembly since 1910. The vital issue was whether or not the government was willing to place itself on record to suppress the publication of the "Alberta Herald" and to prosecute those guilty of treason or sedition in connection with the publication thereof. The final outcome was that the government declined to declare for action against seditious journals and seditious individuals, facts seemingly unbelievable but which will be supported in their entirety when the official journals of the house are issued.

At the close of business about 2.45

the premier referred to a news item in a morning paper and proceeded to attack Mr. R. B. Bennett and to state the startling proposition that the provincial government assumed no responsibility for the suppression of sedition within the province. This outry, he declared, rested solely with the Dominion authorities.

Mr. Tweedie rose to combat the position and after he spoke the speaker closed off further discussion by ruling that no further debate could

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## **GERMAN CRUISER**

## **SINKS THIRTEEN**

take place without a formal motion and immediately adjourned the house. If the attitude of the government was to be further considered there was no alternative but to introduce a formal motion. This was done and the situation which arose out of the introduction of the resolution was sensational. Premier Sifton lost control of himself to such an extent that he attributed ulterior motives to members of the house, ranted about politics, studiously avoided the question by misrepresenting it was a vote of want of confidence in the government.

And in the midst of the turmoil Hon. Duncan Marshall came to the assistance of the premier.

"It's a dirty Tory trick," interpolated Mr. Marshall with customary suave courtesy.

#### Mr. Marshall Retracts

Instantly Mr. Speaker had to take a hand in events, for while members of the legislature in Alberta never resort to fist-cuffs, there were at least eighteen members who were ready to make Mr. Marshall retract by any necessary means. It was Dr. Stewart of Lethbridge, who succeeded in catching the speaker's eye and his demand for an immediate retraction was confirmed by Mr. Speaker and acceded to with poor grace by Mr. Marshall.

#### Hon. Chas. Stewart to Rescue

Into this surcharged atmosphere came Hon. Charles Stewart, who accelerated the discomfort of the treasury benches with an open and unmistakable reproof to Premier Sifton and Mr. Marshall. He chided them for losing control of themselves, and they were too overwrought to trust themselves in further utterance.

While the instantaneous effect of the situation was visible only in the complete loss of control of the house and tempers by Messrs. Sifton and Marshall, the real significance of the incident lies much deeper. It means that insofar as the government of Alberta is concerned, sedition or treason can be preached with impunity even in time of war.

#### Liberals Were Interested

In this instance the newspaper charged with seditious utterances was one time controlled, and may still be, by one member of the Sifton government, a former cabinet minister, and others very close to the inside of Liberal politics in the capital. In fact it is freely stated that the Alberta Herald was one of the purchases made out of the notorious Liberal election fund of 1911. At any rate the publication has been faithful to grit purposes through fair weather and foul, and it may be only to sedition in such oracles that the government proposes to turn its deaf ear.

The startling disruption of the absolute harmony by which the session was otherwise marked lies directly at the door of the premier.

Presuming overmuch upon the good nature of his opponents, he sought to take advantage of a moment when the house was ready to prorogue to vent his personal spleen against R. B. Bennett, K.C., M.P. He attacked the Calgary man heatedly because of a statement regarding the failure of the attorney-general's department to prosecute papers publishing seditious matter.

#### Where Blame Rests

Mr. Sifton, the patriot, marshalled all his verbal extinguishers to prove Mr. Bennett a politician. But the one excuse for inactivity in the face of certain knowledge that all reasonable rights of freedom of speech were being transgressed was that the attorney-general's department was putting it up to the militia department to maintain the criminal code, despite the fact that this duty is vested in the province by virtue of the province's autonomy. Beyond this statement the premier made no effort to justify the position of the government. He chose the opportunity to revile Mr. Bennett and his motives, an act which he presumably thought would awaken no protest in the last minutes of a war session.

But rather than go out after Mr. Bennett's scalp on a public platform, he chose the security of the legislative chamber, where he was free from re-

port and the provisions of the libel act.

Mr. Sifton underestimated the temper of the men who were Mr. Bennett's colleagues and successors in the Alberta house.

### Government Challenged

T. M. Tweedie was addressing the speaker as Mr. Sifton sat down. He challenged the government to disprove a single charge against the seditious nature of the paper in question. Not only was this impossible; Hon. John R. Boyle furthered Mr. Tweedie's assertion by declaring the publication to be seditious in utterance and stating that its publishers should be punished.

Mr. Sifton began to see the folly of his outbreak. He was being hoist with his own petard; torpedoed from all angles. He had precipitated a debate in which the position which he had taken was totally untenable. He moved that the house adjourn for lunch, and it was intimated that the lieutenant governor would be there to prorogue the session when the members returned at 3.30 o'clock.

When the legislature did re-assemble, Mr. Tweedie asked leave to introduce a motion. As there had been no observation of the rules all session Mr. Speaker granted the Calgary member's request, without requiring 24 hours' notice.

### Gallery Applauds

Mr. Tweedie discussed treason and sedition and the responsibility of those who allowed it with such force and conviction that people in the galleries cried:

"That's it, Calgary! Tell it to them!"

And he told it to them in terms that reddened the ears behind the treasury benches and sent notes fluttering up and down, apparently to inspire the back benches to sit tight and vote when the premier did.

### Mr. Tweedie's Stand

In part, Mr. Tweedie said: "I have previously made a few remarks upon the subject of sedition and treason in time of war. I wish to make it clear that I have the utmost sympathy for newcomers from countries now at war with us, if they cannot help feelings of fealty to their country. They have not yet been assimilated by altered conditions in their new homes. But my sympathy for them does not extend to the open preaching of sedition by a paper published and printed by people who are conversant with conditions, and realize the seriousness of their actions. The paper in this instance is published by men whom I believe to be educated to know that conduct such as theirs, if followed in their own country, would result in the speedy death of those guilty.

"We are proud of British liberty, of freedom of speech and personal liberty, but that pride does not carry us to such ridiculous extremes as to permit the publication of matter seditious and traitorous to the British empire; matter conceived to defeat the cause for which Canada and the empire, Alberta itself is sacrificing the lives of sons, husbands and fathers; matter inspired to delude and misinform those not familiar with actual conditions and to awaken unrest and discontent here at home.

### Unworthy of Confidence

"Why have we permitted this seditious publication to continue its sinister work? The first minister tells us that the government has been leaving it to the department of militia? Why should it be left to that department when we, here on the ground, have the right and the duty and the machinery to suppress and prosecute either for sedition or treason? The criminal code of Canada deals with the offence, as it deals with murder, or horse stealing. We do not refer the matter to Ottawa to prosecute for horse stealing, nor do we rely upon any private citizen to undertake the responsibility of prosecuting. That is the function of the attorney-general's department and any government or attorney-general that will permit this form of treachery and treason to continue, in order to escape the responsibility of prosecuting a paper because it has enjoyed the political support of that paper, is unworthy of the confidence of the people.

### Resolution Introduced

"I ask leave to move, seconded by Mr. Ewing (Edmonton), the following resolution:

"That in the opinion of this house immediate steps should be taken by the government of the province, through the department of the attorney-general, to suppress the publication of the Alberta Herald and to prosecute those guilty of treason or sedition in connection with the publication therewith."

"For I propose," concluded Mr. Tweedie, "that if this government intends to allow sedition or treason to run unrestrained, as in the case of the Alberta Herald, the people must know about it."

Mr. Tweedie also pointed out the ridiculousness of the premier's contention that the investigation and prosecution of sedition and treason was being left to the department of militia. He quoted the words of Hon. C. R. Mitchell to show that the government has been detaching detectives to try and catch some foreigners living near Irvine who were suspected of voting wrong, at some seditious practice.

### Up to Attorney-General

A. F. Ewing, in rising to second the motion, stated that he did so with a very full appreciation of the responsibilities imposed on him. With the empire engaged in a great war in which the sacrifices demanded thus far would perhaps prove slight in comparison with those yet to be made the problem of sedition and treason was something far apart from politics. He did not care what the nationality of the paper or the publisher who was guilty of sedition, it was the bounden duty of the attorney-general's department to prosecute promptly and vigorously. The latitude of free speech must stop at sedition and treason, particularly in a time such as the present.

### Sifton Convicts Himself

"I thought," said Premier Sifton, when he arose to reply, "that there was only one man in this province who would take advantage of a time like this to introduce such a matter for political purposes."

Edward Mitchener (Red Deer) interrupted.

"May I asked who introduced this subject in this house?" he said.

And with no other answer possible Mr. Sifton replied:

"I did."

Having thus convicted himself of being the one man who would take advantage of such a situation, Mr. Sifton continued by charging that he now found Mr. Tweedie and Mr. Ewing ready to do the same, because they would not let him get away with his earlier address. Mr. Sifton was plainly shocked to think that Messrs. Ewing and Tweedie would give him a dose of his own medicine without the sugar coating and put the matter up so straight that he had only two alternatives; to abandon the government policy and come out flatfooted on the records for the prosecution of sedition and treason or to acknowledge openly that these high crimes could be committed with impunity as far as the department for the administration of justice in Alberta is concerned.

### Fellow Sifton Blindly

Mr. Sifton has not mastered the art of retreating. He elected to accept the second alternative. It was a bitter selection and his acceptance of it was accompanied by bitter words. It was a shameful proceeding to make him go on record as opposed to law and order or forced to switch his policy, according to Mr. Sifton. His supporters backed him by the liberal application of elbow grease in pounding their desks for they too were in the same predicament and had to follow blindly.

"It's a dirty Tory trick," said Mr. Marshall, as the premier sat down.

Then came the retraction and at the same moment Mr. Stewart rose and rebuked the premier and Mr. Marshall for losing their tempers and urged the members to contain themselves in view of the present great world crisis.

To forestall further trouble Mr. Speaker called for the yeas and nays. The yeas had it.

### Straight Party Division

"Vote," urged Mr. Tweedie, which in the language of the house means a bona fide division be taken and a record kept of the matter in which all members present voted. Eighteen Conservative members voted solidly in favor of the enforcement of the law without fear or favoritism and the 31 Liberal members present voted just as solidly to let treason and

sedition run rampant if the attorney general's department wanted to. Messrs. Cross, Glendinning, Smith, Stauffer and Mackay were absent when the vote was taken.

Lieut.-Gov. Dolree performed the closing ceremonies and the clerk of the assembly, Mr. Cowell, commenced his task of handing out the indemnity checks.

### No Frivolities This Time

The House was protracted! But one would never guess it. All the usual frivolities of flying cushions and wads of papers and waste baskets were lacking. The air was still, full of excessive mental heat. Members of the cabinet—the names are omitted be-

cause they will probably be ashamed of their conduct in a day or two—openly rebuked Conservative members for forcing them to a show-down with the people and one cabinet minister quite openly urged a colleague not to belittle himself by talking to Conservative members—to men who had the courage of their convictions and were willing to express them.

Thus ended the war session of the third legislature of Alberta. Only one incident lightened the all-day strain. That occurred when, after three days of careful manipulation, certain members succeeded in getting S. B. Hillocks (North Calgary) to light up a specially prepared cigar. A moment later it went off with a bang to the amusement of the house (watching for the explosion) and the consternation of Mr. Hillocks, who was left sparing for wind and trying to spot the culprit.

At the close of the session, Liberal members met in the executive chamber and presented Premier Hifton with a very handsome gold watch.

#### Conservatives Dine

Last evening the Conservative members all dined together at the Alberta hotel. Felicitous addresses were numerous and the dinner closed with a hearty vote of thanks to Edward Michener for his leadership and assurances of the unwavering loyalty of his ever-increasing band of supporters.

A large percentage of the members left for their homes in various sections of the province last night. Others will stay over a few days to wind up departmental business of interest to their communities.