

MANITOBA TO HAVE CIVIL SERVICE ACT

**Dr. Adam Shortt on Way West
to Draft Measure—Will be
Passed This Session.**

As a result of yesterday's session of the legislature it is now known that Manitoba is soon to have a civil service commissioner and that a Civil Service act will be passed, based on the British Columbia act, which provides for a one-man commission. Prof. Adam Shortt, of Ottawa, who drafted the British Columbia act about a year ago, is now on the way to Winnipeg to help draft an act for this province which will contain all the best points of the British Columbia act and none of its deficiencies as shown by the experience of a year.

The debate on the speech from the throne was concluded yesterday and the address in reply adopted.

A significant fact was that two members of the government side of the house, who took part in the debate, voiced strong approval of a minimum wage for women workers on a basis which would ensure a decent livelihood. These members were J. H. McConnell, Hamiota, and R. N. Lowery, North Winnipeg. They both supported the principle of a dower law for the protection of married women. T. D. Ferley, Independent member for Gimli, spoke defending the old bi-lingual system of public school education and championing the Gallican workmen who, he said, were unjustly classed as alien enemies.

Mr. McConnell, of Hamiota, in his address complimented Mr. J. Dixon, Centre Winnipeg, on the latter's logical address of the previous day, but wanted to know Mr. Dixon's views as to the best method of winning the war.

The revelation of the intentions of the government as to civil service reform came as a result of correspondence which was tabled by Hon. T. H. Johnson. The correspondence began with a letter from Mr. Johnson, then minister of public works, dated May 12, 1917, and addressed to Dr. Shortt. The letter asked for suggestions and advice as to civil service legislation. In particular Mr. Johnson wanted to know how to "make the commission independent and immune from any improper control."

Advice From Dr. Shortt.

Four days later Dr. Shortt replied, saying: "There is no possible method except by a government, which is in earnest as to an independent and efficient civil service, selecting for a commissioner or commissioners men whose previous careers have rendered them fairly well known to the public as persons of independent character and good, common sense. Behind such a commission the ministers may take refuge from office seekers."

Dr. Shortt went on to say that such a commission should be held strictly to account and that any grievances should be promptly investigated. If the grievances were sustained and were of a sufficiently serious character the commissioner or commissioners should be disposed of. Such a commission could co-operate with the ministers. As to the method of selecting the commissioner, Dr. Shortt intimated that some authorities thought that superior court judges or a special board should do this, but he thought that superfluous where a government trusted itself and was trusted by the people.

On Dec. 27, 1917, Mr. Johnson wrote to Prof. Shortt saying: "Our government has decided to introduce at the forthcoming session a Civil Service act, and we have all studied more or less the bill which you prepared for the British Columbia legislature about a year ago. You are the one to whom we naturally turn in connection with matters of this kind."

Mr. Johnson went on to say in his letter that he thought it would be better if Dr. Shortt would come to Winnipeg and suggest such changes in the British Columbia act as experience and the added knowledge of a year's research would suggest to him.

On the order paper was a request of P. A. Talbot's for a return as to all correspondence in regard to superannuation of civil service servants or any bill relating to civil service. This had been on the order paper for several days, and Mr. Johnson, remarking on the hesitancy of Mr. Talbot to make the motion, suggested that the correspondence with Dr. Shortt covered at least part of the return asked for. The British Columbia act provides for one commissioner of civil service. It was the most efficient act

which Dr. Shortt could draft a year ago, and it is expected that the Manitoba measure will be a little better.

An Unusual Procedure.

A peculiar incident of yesterday's session of the legislature was the action of P. A. Talbot, La Verandrye, in moving for the suspension of the rules and that the house grant leave of absence to the three soldier-members overseas. This is usually left for the first minister and is done at any time during the session. Premier Norris has been absent for the week.

Hon. T. H. Johnson protested against the motion being accepted, and said that while he thanked Mr. Talbot for his tender solicitude the government had not lost sight of the matter and that it would be attended to in due form.

The speaker refused to accept the motion made by Mr. Talbot.

Before the orders of the day were called, Hon. T. H. Johnson referred to F. J. Dixon's references of the previous day to the alleged treatment meted out to conscientious objectors. He (Mr. Johnson) had known nothing about the matter at that time. He

had made inquiries and had found out that a thorough investigation was under way. He thought the house could properly defer judgment until the result of the inquiry had been ascertained.

Debate on Address.

J. H. McConnell, Hamilton, resumed the debate on the address. He referred to the changes that had occurred in the house since 1914. There was a sadness in regard to some of the changes due to the war. He thought the discussions of the house should be serious and not merely political. All energies should be directed toward the one great end of winning the war. One great lesson to be learned was that of national thrift.

Mr. McConnell declared that the Manitoba Temperance act was a "God-send" to the province. He had knowledge of many homes now prosperous under the severe war conditions that were not happy under the old conditions.

Legislation for Women.

Mr. McConnell declared in favor of a minimum wage for women. He also urged that there should be a dower law for wives. There were lots of women in the province who needed protection from bad husbands, he said. He was sure that all the husbands in the province were not nice ones like those in the legislature (laughter).

Mr. McConnell paid a high tribute to the work of the education department as shown by the report of the minister, Hon. Dr. R. S. Thornton.

Referring to F. J. Dixon's speech the previous day, Mr. McConnell said it was marked by a lot of common sense, but he would like to hear the member for Winnipeg Centre, Seat B, declare just what were his views on winning the war. Mr. Dixon was a representative of Labor, and in the old land the Labor party was taking a foremost part in presenting a front against the enemy.

Aliens Will Not Work.

Speaking of the farm help situation, Mr. McConnell said that young alien enemies would not help the farmers in the winter time at a fair wage. These young men would work in the summer for high wages, but they would not work all the year round. The farmers were willing to do their part in helping the country and were preparing their plans for a big year's production. He thought the young men referred to should be made to realize their duty.

Mr. McConnell sympathized with the provincial treasurer in the arduous task thrust upon him in trying to straighten out the tangled financial conditions left by the previous administration. The provincial treasurer was being criticized for finding it necessary to secure money to complete a building started by the previous administration the foundations of which had been found to be rotten and which had to be repaired at great expense. Mr. McConnell thought such criticism wholly unfair.

Ferley and Bi-Lingual Schools.

T. D. Ferley, Gimli, said there was not much to criticize the government for but there was an excuse to offer suggestions.

As to Hon. Dr. Thornton's report on education, Mr. Ferley questioned the statement that the abolition of the bi-lingual system had improved conditions. He thought the progress was due to other administrative causes. He knew of cases where the foreign children did better under a teacher who knew their mother-tongue. Children took advantage of a teacher who did not know their mother-tongue, and consequently the morality of such a school was lowered. Mr. Ferley declared that he did not question the statement that the "foreigners" were anxious to learn the English language. This was true, but they also wanted to learn their mother-tongue.

Mr. Ferley said there were some spies and some real alien enemies among the foreign-born people in Canada, but these were not found among the working people. Many innocent people had been treated harshly as alien enemies. Mr. Ferley went on to criticize the War Times Election act, saying that it had disfranchised many people unjustly. As to conscription of alien labor, Mr. Ferley declared that the Galicians did not deserve such treatment. They were loyal to the Dominion, and a majority of them had purchased Victory bonds.

Mr. Ferley urged that an act be passed prohibiting implement agents from taking a mortgage on the farmers' belongings other than the machinery sold. He alleged that poor farmers of foreign birth were sometimes sadly fleeced in this way.

Lowery Endorses Recent Acts.

R. N. Lowery, North Winnipeg, Seat A, began by paying a tribute to Robert Jacob, the new member for North Winnipeg, Seat B, who is yet to be introduced to the house. In endorsing the government's action in passing the Temperance act and woman's suffrage, Mr. Lowery warned the member for Ste. Rose, Joseph Hamelin, who was still in doubt as to the latter, that the ladies would

acquit themselves well at the next election and probably not to his liking (laughter).

Mr. Lowery favored the principle of a married woman's dower law. The war had shown that the women of Canada were of a spirit and type which deserved the fullest equality and justice.

\$5 An Impossible Wage.

Regarding the minimum wage for girls, Mr. Lowery said he agreed that no girl could live in this city on \$5 a week and have a proper living. Every working girl deserved a fair wage which would give her a decent livelihood and an opportunity for proper recreation.

Mr. Lowery praised the operation of the Mothers' Allowance act. It was being well administered, he said.

Mr. Lowery's speech closed the debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne, and the address was formally approved by the house.

Robert Jacob, the newly elected North Winnipeg member, will be sworn in today or Monday, and will take his seat at the evening session Monday.

Hon. Valentine Winkler introduced a bill to enable municipalities to borrow limited amounts of money for seed grain purposes.

J. H. McConnell, Hamiota, introduced a bill respecting the school district of Penrith No. 813.

The house added Dr. W. J. Harrington, Dauphin, to the agricultural committee; T. D. Ferley, Gimli, to the committee on municipal affairs, and R. N. Lowery, North Winnipeg, to the law amendments committee.

The house adjourned until Monday evening at 8 o'clock.