

# COUNCIL REFUSES TO DISFRANCHISE ALIENS

## Warm Debate, in Which Mayor's Proposal Finds Little Support—Rights of Loyal Newcomers Defended

The City Council yesterday rejected a motion put forward by Mayor Church in the Board of Control recommending the Government to disfranchise Austrians, Germans and other alien enemies who have not lived in Canada for twenty-five years. The debate, which was precipitated by the moving of an amendment by Ald. Ramsden, was warm and lively, but rather one-sided, the Mayor finding few supporters. Controllers and Aldermen realized that the Mayor had led them into dangerous ground, and they protested that they were not defending alien enemies, but standing up for British fair play.

### Motion and Amendment.

The Mayor's resolution read as follows:

"That the City Council be requested to present a petition to the Dominion Government urging on them an amendment of the franchise act to disfranchise Austrians, Germans and other aliens who have not been domiciled in Canada for a period of at least twenty-five years, and that the Federal franchise act be amended accordingly."

Ald. Ramsden moved the following amendment:

"That the City Council be requested to present a petition to the Dominion Government urging on them the necessity of greater vigilance in detecting alien enemies in the country by the secret service and police, and that proper punishment be meted out for insults to our loyal citizens so that the army will not be brought into disrepute by being obliged to ferret out cases for themselves, and so that no further reason will be given for lawlessness that will make excuses for reprisals on our Canadian boys in the hands of the enemy."

### Ill-advised and un-British.

"The other day I was somewhat displeased by the question asked by our silver-haired patriarch (Dr. Hastings) whether we were statesmen or politicians," said Ald. Ramsden, in moving his amendment. "I would like to know whether the Board of Control were politicians or statesmen when they passed this resolution. If we adopt the motion as it stands we are suggesting to the Government the disfranchisement of every naturalized British citizen in Canada.

"It requires no great heroism to bring in a resolution like that at this particular time, when we all hate the atrocities of the German and the Turk. I say that this resolution is untimely, ill-advised, undemocratic, and is not British.

### Making New Citizens.

"We allow these aliens to come to this country to escape from Kaiserism, and we say to them: 'If you prove true and loyal we will extend to you the hand of fellowship; but at the slightest sign of treachery there is the internment camp, the prison or the nearest lamp-post for you.'

"There are only two classes of citizens in Canada—the Canadian and the enemy.

"I know that in taking this position I shall be misrepresented by certain sections of the press; but I stand here to-day, the son of an Englishman, and I say that you should not place on the records of this Council anything that looks smaller or narrower than the country to which it belongs. Are you going to make good citizens of these people in this way, or do you prefer to treat them as the British Government treated the Boers in South Africa?"

### Mayor Has Fears.

Mayor Church, rising to defend his motion, said: "This is a British country, and these Austro-Germans must be kept under control. There is too much Austro-German stuff already in Canada. Germany did not think whether the Belgians were statesmen or politicians when they invaded their country. We do not want another Quebec in Canada. The Austro-German vote is ruling in the Northwest to-day. The Austro-German vote must be abolished in Canada. I hope the people of Canada will not be in the position of the United States in a few years. If this country is worth fighting for it is worth keeping British. So far as Toronto goes, we want to see the German-Austrian disfranchised, and it is time the Government should act.

"There has been some talk of the 'lawlessness of soldiers'; they have a right to visit these munition plants. It has been reported that preference has been given to alien enemies in these plants. The amendment is an insult to the returned soldier. The munition manufacturers are too much taken up with making money."

Alderman McGregor suggested that the word "enemy" inserted after the word alien might make the motion more acceptable.

### Aliens and the Vote.

Ald. Gibbons said: "This Council is not attending to its own business in presenting such a resolution. I regard it as a cheap bit of patriotism. If the alien is good enough to come to this country and work side by side with British workingmen he is good enough to vote or he should be kept out altogether. The soldiers did right, but they should not stop where they did. They should go after the grafters who released these aliens from the internment camp to take the place of men who would not work for the wages. I move that all Austrians, Germans and other alien enemies be deported after the war, and that the Government enact legislation to keep them out of the country."

Ald. Fenwick said he did not see why they should not pass the resolution.

### What is an Enemy?

"What is an alien enemy?" asked Ald. Archibald. "So far as the aliens are concerned, the Government has the remedy in its own hands, if it likes to use it, and it is none of our business. We have big enough problems on our own hands. We have invited these people to come, and surely those who have abided by the laws of Canada have their rights. We want to bring together the peoples of various races, but this resolution would sweep them all aside."

Ald. Singer thought they were taking too much notice of the Board of

Control. "It is not our duty or right to dictate to the Government."

"You cannot disfranchise men who have not got the franchise," said Ald. Ball. "If they are alien enemies they have no vote."

Mayor Church explained that it was not the intention to disfranchise those of German parentage who were born in Canada.

### Soldiers and Franchise.

Ald. Ramsden—What will you do with the Swedes and other aliens who are fighting with the Canadian forces in France?

Mayor Church—All soldiers will have the franchise.

Ald. Singer—This resolution only affects those who are not naturalized. If a man is naturalized he is not an Austrian or a German; he is a Canadian. We have enough to worry about without going to the northwest. It is absurd that a proposal like this should go out as an action of this Council. It is practically taking away the right of the British subject to vote."

### Controller Cameron's Change.

Controller Cameron said: "This subject affords great scope for talk. I think it would be a good idea to send it back. I supported it in the board to let it come to Council. It was not sent forward to disfranchise the workman."

Ald. Whetter—I do not like either the motion or the amendment. I know men who have been in this country less than five years who were glad to get away from Germany. They are good Canadians, and this resolution would disfranchise them.

Ald. Nesbitt was in sympathy with the motion.

"The spirit that prompted it was all right," said Controller Cameron. "But we should be careful and see that we are absolutely clear what it means. I know it will be said outside that those who voted against it were favoring the enemy, and those who vote for it will be regarded as patriots."

### Naturalized Citizens' Rights.

Controller Shaw said he could not harmonize with the Mayor's views. "Do we want to take away the franchise from naturalized citizens? This asks us to do so. The matter has not been well considered by the Board of Control. I hope it will not pass."

Mayor Church—It was passed by the Board of Control, and now you are trying to get out of it.

Controller Cameron—I did not oppose it because you can't discuss these things in the Board of Control without getting into trouble. I don't want to make a lot of enemies who will come along blocking my vote.

### Resolution Sent Back.

When the resolution was put to the vote of the Council Ald. Maguire moved that it be referred back. He said he had been informed by the City Solicitor that if a man was naturalized the franchise could not be taken away from him.

The Council voted 16 to 5 for sending the resolution back.

"That's the end of it so far as I am concerned," said the Mayor.

The following was the voting on Ald. Maguire's motion to refer back the resolution for the disfranchisement of aliens:

Yeas—Maguire, Cameron, Shaw, Singer, Hiltz, McMullin, Fenwick, McGregor, Beanish, Whetter, Gibbons, Risk, McBrien, Ramsden, Graham, O'Neil—sixteen.

Nays—Foster, Nesbitt, Ball, Ryding, the Mayor—five.

### A Pavement Question.

Mr. S. R. Parsons, representing the British American Oil Company, appeared before Council with the request for the repeal of the recommendation for a granite block pavement on Cherry street. He stated that the company would have to pay \$18,000 for its portion of the cost of the pavement. He declared that the Council by its action was driving industries away from the city. The company were only paying 12 cents per foot for the frontage of their works in Montreal, and they were asked to pay \$3 per foot on Cherry street.