

SERVICE WILL BE BASIS OF FRANCHISE, PRINCIPLE OF WAR TIME ELECTION ACT

Conscientious Objectors and Citizens of Alien Enemy Birth Naturalized During Last Fif- teen Years Won't Vote on War Issues.

FEMALE RELATIVES OF MEN OVERSEAS WILL BE GIVEN FRANCHISE UNDER NEW BILL

The all-important franchise bill was introduced in the Commons yesterday by Hon. Arthur Meighen, Secretary of State, the first bill to be introduced by the distinguished young Minister since his appointment to a portfolio. This duty fell to him in the absence of the Prime Minister who is compelled to rest for some days after his arduous labors of the past few months. It is essentially a war time measure and is officially known as the "War Time Election Act." It takes care that enemies of the cause of the Allies will not be allowed to cast their votes against the interests of Canada or her defenders so far as any legislation can accomplish this.

War Service the Basis.

There was a crowded House when Mr. Meighen rose to explain the provisions of the bill, and his every word was followed with the closest attention. In the most lucid language—this was referred to in a complimentary way by Sir Wilfrid Laurier—he set forth the aims of the Government. "War service should be the basis of war fran-

chise," he laid down as the basic principle; and those exempt from war service should not be in a position to exercise any measure of control over those who are bearing the burden of the war. Therefore conscientious objectors and those citizens of alien enemy origin who have only been naturalized during the last fifteen years will not have the privilege of voting in the war elections. Those also who, born in other countries, speak as their mother tongue an alien enemy language will also be disfranchised.

The Women's Vote.

Women for the first time in federal elections will be given the right to vote, but the extension of the franchise to women will only be partial. Only the relatives of the soldiers overseas will be allowed to vote, their wives or widows, their mothers, daughters and sisters. This, judging from the applause, proved to be one of the most popular conditions of the bill. An unlimited admission of women to the franchise, Mr. Meighen explained, would at the present time be unfair and unreasonable.

No Waste of Time.

It was early made evident that the Government intends to allow no undue waste of time over the measure. Mr. Meighen wanted to go on with the second reading yesterday, but this could only be done with the con-

THOSE WHO VOTE IN THE NEXT ELECTION

Those who will be allowed to vote at the next federal election in Canada, according to the bill presented yesterday, and the soldiers' vote bill which was passed recently, are:

All civilian citizen males over 21, except conscientious objectors to military service, those of alien enemy origin who have become naturalized citizens within fifteen years, and those of alien enemy mother tongue, although born in other countries and naturalized less than fifteen years ago.

All soldiers in the Canadian forces.

All Canadian soldiers in the Imperial forces.

Wives, widows, mothers, and sisters over 21, of soldiers in the overseas forces.

All nurses and other women officially connected with the overseas forces.

sent of the Opposition. It was refused and the Secretary of State announced that the second reading would be proceeded with today. This also met with objections on the part of the Opposition, but it is unlikely that the wishes of Hon. William Pugsley and other obstructors will be acceded to.

"The bill which I now present," said Mr. Meighen in beginning, "affects only an election in time of war or during mobilization, and goes out of existence entirely when such period is over.

"The necessity of a War Time Elections Act arises solely from the fact that there is a war time election, and the purpose of the bill now introduced is solely to meet the extraordinary conditions encountered, in the necessity of deciding at such a time by an electoral contest, so vital an issue as now confronts the Canadian people.

"We find ourselves compelled to submit what is really the destiny of our country to the arbitrament of the ballot at a time when the best part of our manhood is struggling in the throes of a death com-

bat overseas. Upwards of 300,000 of the sons of Canada are absent from our shores, and of those 300,000 it is a moral certainty that a large percentage will not be physically able to exercise the franchise. The nearer we approach the reality that a general election is inevitable, the more regrettable the necessity for such an election appears.

"The entire personal force and influence of these 300,000 men is stripped from them for the purpose of this contest. They are the foremost of our sons, the very bone, sinew and virility of Canada. Those at home who should be at home and those at home who should be overseas are in the full enjoyment not only of their ballot, but of the exertion of their faculties in whatever direction they desire to exert them in this contest; but a penalty falls on those who have been true enough and brave enough to fight our battles, in that they are deprived in part of the ballot and wholly of their electoral influence.

Can't Forget Fallen.

"Nor can we forget that some 30,000 have already fallen in the struggle. Their voices are still, while the voices of those who remained behind can be heard, and will be heard. Some thousands more are prisoners of war and are suffering hardships unspeakable for the sake of those at home.

"The considerations to which I have referred will I think make it plain to the minds of all if a contest at the polls must come Parliament must address itself to the task of bringing about such electoral conditions as will repair as fully as Parliament can repair, the injustice that would under an ordinary franchise fall upon our soldiers overseas.

"It is proposed that by a measure of woman enfranchisement, added strength shall be given to the voice of the soldiers of Canada. Those of their nearest kin at home may be presumed to be most likely to re-echo the sentiments of their sons, husbands and brothers overseas, and by this bill the nearest female relatives of the men of our expeditionary forces who have left the shores of Canada are given the right to vote. The wife or widow, the mothers, the daughters and the sisters of overseas soldiers are by this bill enfranchised.

"Under the abnormal circumstances precipitated by the present war the measure of women suffrage which I have just outlined, is deemed fitting and does indeed constitute in my judgment a reasonably general extension of the franchise to women.

"A line of limitation must therefore be found. The principal reason for adopting the line laid down by this bill is that it is the only means of extending to the soldiers living, dead, or in chains, an adequate voice in the decision of a great electoral contest fraught with consequences peculiarly vital to themselves.

"War service should be the basis of war franchise. When the war is over, a wider franchise may well be given the women of Canada and it is my earnest hope and belief that the step now taken may lead to such result.

"So far as legislation can attain the end the obligation to war service and the right to war franchise, should go hand in hand.

Objectors Want Vote.

"As to the conscientious objectors, it is not considered right that those who refuse on conscientious grounds to bear arms should be enabled in the midst of a war either to compel others to fight for them or to deny to those who do battle, the right to re-enforcements.



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