

FRANCHISE BILL NOW OUT OF COMMITTEE

Closure Brings it to Third Reading—Polls to Open at 6 a.m.

The debate in committee on the Franchise Bill concluded in the Commons at two o'clock this morning under the closure rule and now stands for third reading. The debate on the third reading will take place today, and if the Liberals show signs of obstruction the Government will give notice of closure, and the vote will take place tomorrow under the auspices of that rule. The bill will then go to the Senate on Saturday.

There was no reason for compelling the Government to resort to closure. Yesterday the Prime Minister offered Sir Wilfrid Laurier three days in which to discuss the bill in committee, namely Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, provided he would guarantee third reading on Saturday. To this the Liberal leader would not agree. The closure motion had a narrow escape of defeat on a snap vote. It only carried by 43 to 35, a majority of 8, and several Conservative members only arrived just in time to have their votes recorded.

Amendments Made.

A useful day was spent on the bill, and some important amendments were made. Mr. F. B. Carvell pointed out that in New Brunswick a man might vote whether he was a resident of the province or not, so long as his name was on the list, names being kept on for years after the parties had left, and Hon. Arthur Meighen, who has charge of the bill, moved an amendment that a man to vote must be a resident of Canada. Mr. Carvell expressed gratification at the acceptance of his suggestion, and said this would get rid of a lot of the difficulties the Liberals had in connection with the measure. It would keep off the voters' lists men who were residents of the United States.

Polls Open at Six.

Another important amendment causes the polls to be opened at 6 o'clock in the morning instead of nine o'clock in the cities. This will accommodate the laboring class, commercial travellers, etc. Fifteen days instead of ten will be allowed to elapse between the posting of the lists and the polling days, and the time permitted for appeals has been extended from three to five days.

There was a good deal of discussion as to the votes for the Canadians in the Naval Service. Hon. J. D. Hazen showed readiness to meet the views of the Opposition in this regard, and as a result the female relatives of the cadets in the Royal Naval College at Halifax, will not be allowed a vote, but those who enlist in the patrol service from now on will have the same privileges in respect to the franchise as the men in the overseas land forces.

Hon. Jacques Bureau mentioned that one of the Montreal dynamitards was a former soldier and an outlaw and suggested that female relatives of deserters should not be given the franchise. This was agreed to, and the bill amended accordingly.

How Closure Came.

The closure was applied within a few minutes of the opening of the House. When the orders of the day were called, Sir Wilfrid Laurier expressed his regrets that the Government should see fit to move the closure. "I have no objection to them moving the closure," he said, "if they want to do so. But whether they want to do it or not, all we desire is a proper discussion of the bill."

Sir Robert Borden suggested that Wednesday, Thursday and Friday should be given to discussion in committee of the bill, with the third reading on Saturday. He asked if the Opposition would be willing to give assurance to that effect.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier—"My hon. friend must realize that it is no conducive to the making of agreements to have them offered under threat. We are told that we are not to do this or that, or that we shall have the closure. So far as I am concerned, I do not intend to prolong the discussion one minute more than is necessary to a thorough understanding of the bill. Under such circumstances I can not make any agreement whatever, and if my right hon. friend will not be satisfied with that I cannot say any more. I have no intention at all of prolonging the discussion."

Sir Robert Borden replied that he had made what he considered an exceedingly reasonable proposal, and he had no alternative but to move that further consideration of clauses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and the schedule "shall be the first business of the day, and shall not be further postponed."

Hon. Mr. Pugsley immediately raised a point of order that the motion should be made in committee. The House then went into committee, and the motion was submitted. It was carried by 43 to 35, and the committee proceeded to further consideration of the bill.

Defining then the term "complete demobilization," as used in the bill, Mr. Meighen gave it as his opinion that it would be the moment when Canadian overseas soldiers were released from their obligations as Expeditionary soldiers. He said further that the bill would be applicable to by elections.

By an amendment Mr. Meighen made a concession in regard to enumerators. Under the bill as introduced voters' lists had to be posted at least ten days before election day and from then, till within three days of election day, the enumerator could add or strike off names as provided. By his amendment Mr. Meighen extended the ten days to 15 days and the three days to five days.

Mr. Carvell's Complaint.

Mr. Carvell again protested that he could not understand the provisions in regard to enumerators. "I don't understand how in the world we shall work it out," he declared. "You say you will appoint some friend—"

"We don't say that," Mr. Meighen interrupted.

Mr. Carvell: "Yes, that is what it means. The most offensive partisan in the district will be appointed. This partisan makes up his list. We have nothing to say about it. We have no representation. We are not entitled to representation, and 15 days before the election he puts up a list and he gives notice that he is going to sit somewhere two hours a day. Why not provide a solemn declaration or affidavit, and that he must act on it. I can pick out the men in my country who have put electors on the list, who don't reside there. They have perjured voters at elections, rushed them over

from the States in automobiles on election day and rushed them back again. The Lord help any Liberal candidate engaged in New Brunswick with these people to make up the list." Mr. Carvell suggested that municipal authorities should make up the lists.

Discussing the hours at which polls were to open Mr. Meighen was of the opinion that it would not be in the general interest to keep the polls open after five o'clock. Three more hours added to the time for voting would constitute a very great increase. If added at the end of the day he felt that the time would be of little benefit to laborers, most of whom voted in the morning. The rush at the polls was just after the opening, if possible said the Solicitor-General, election day would be on Monday.

Early Voting in Cities.

The Solicitor General then introduced several minor amendments to the wording of different clauses of the bill which were adopted by the committee. A further amendment submitted by the Solicitor General provided that voting hours would be from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. instead of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. as at present in the following cities (including those mentioned in the bill): Kingston, Moose Jaw, Brockville, Stratford, Hull, St. Thomas, Saskatoon, Moncton, Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, Hamilton, London, Montreal, Ottawa, Quebec, Regina, St. John, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria and Winnipeg. The first eight were inserted by amendment, the remainder being mentioned in the bill.

Doukhobors Free.

Hon. Frank Oliver asked as to the position of Doukhobors who had left the country as ordinary Canadian citizens. Would they be free from the prohibition of the Act?

Mr. Meighen was of the opinion that they would.

Mr. Oliver then asked whether a man of alien enemy descent was debarred from voting no matter what country he had been born in. He put this question, he said, in view of the fact that there were a large number of persons of alien enemy descent in Western Canada who were born in the United States.

The Secretary of State answered that such people would not be debarred from voting. Only those born in any enemy country or speaking an enemy language were prohibited from exercising the franchise.

Mr. Oliver suggested that there should be some direction to the enumerators engaged in making lists of female voters to the effect that they must establish the identity of the soldier relatives of women whose names were put on the lists. All that the bill compelled an enumerator to do was to ask a woman applying for registration whether she had a son, brother or husband serving overseas. If she answered yes, he simply put down her name.

Establish Identity.

Mr. Meighen thought that there should be some safeguard in the line suggested by Mr. Oliver. At any rate the enumerators should be called upon to take the name and number of the soldier and try in every way to establish his identity.

Some amusement was caused when Mr. Meighen moved an amendment adding to the oath administered to the electors the words "So Help Me God."

Mr. Pugsley said he did not wonder at the Minister having such an amendment; and Mr. Michaud wanted to know if the amendment would affect the principle of the bill.

Mr. Meighen replied that the Liberals had omitted this prayer for 14 years but he thought it desirable to restore it to the oath.

Tribute to Women.

Mr. Morphy said that on the Opposition side there seemed to be no love for the wives and sisters and widows of the boys at the front. There were no more patriotic women than those of Canada. It amused him, he said, to observe the attitude of an hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. MacKenzie), who, posing as being of Gaelic descent, yet voted against conscription—against sending help to our boys at the front. The attitude of the Opposition he asserted was charged with weakness as indicated by the fact that it had run out of speakers before elapse of closure.

At five minutes to two some excitement was caused by the fact that

Col. Currie, Mr. Pugsley and L. A. Lapointe all took the floor at the same time.

Speaker Rainville ruled that Mr. Pugsley had the floor and was speaking at two o'clock. When there were cries of time, Mr. Pugsley maintained that as he had started to speak before two o'clock, he still had fifteen minutes.

Dr. Edwards took the point of order that as Mr. Pugsley had spoken before he was not entitled to any further time.

Pressed Point.

The point of order was agreed to by the Deputy Speaker, but he asked Dr. Edwards not to press it.

Dr. Edwards insisted, however, on the rule being sustained.

J. T. Marcile, of Bagot, wanted to speak, but was shouted down.

Clause one was then adopted on division. An amendment to clause 2 moved by L. A. Lapointe that the polls in cities remain open until 8 o'clock, was voted down on a standing vote, which was not announced.

The other clauses were adopted on division. On the motion to report the bill from committee, Dr. Pugsley claimed the right to speak and that the bill was again open to debate and amendment.

Speaker Rhodes ruled against Mr. Pugsley.

The amendments were then concurred in and the bill stands for third reading.