

ELECTION ACT IS PASSED BY THE COMMONS

Goes Through Under Closure at
Early Hour After Sharp
Debate

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(Staff Correspondence of The Globe.)

OTTAWA, Sept. 14.—In more ways than one, Toryism, as exemplified by the Borden Government, established a record to-night. The franchise bill, depriving at least 25,000 free citizens of Canada of their pledged rights under the naturalization act, and granting votes to 500,000 women, with a radical change in the whole Dominion election machinery, was steam-rolled through the Commons under the gag rule after practically only three days discussion. Since Confederation no legislation of anything approaching similar importance has ever before been rushed through with so little consideration or opportunity for full and fair discussion.

The bill has been rushed so fast that the Government Printing Bureau could hardly keep pace with its progress, and right up to the last moment members of the Opposition were contending that even on the third reading the bill

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was not yet printed without mistakes.

When the last revision of the Dominion elections act was made in 1908 the then Conservative Opposition discussed the measure for weeks, and even months, although that revision contained nothing like the radical changes of the present measure.

This time there has been less discussion given than is usually given under normal conditions to relatively unimportant Government bills. The bill was introduced for first reading on Thursday, September 6, by the Secretary of State, in a speech of an hour and a half. Second reading was moved at 10 o'clock on Saturday night last, and, after three Liberal speakers had spoken briefly, notice of closure was given.

On Monday, under the twenty-minute rule, seventeen members of the Opposition and six members on the Government side spoke on the general principles of the measure. On Tuesday the day was taken up in general discussion, with the Opposition trying to get information as to the exact meaning, as far as possible, of all the complicated clauses of the bill. That night notice of closure was again given, and on Wednesday, with the bill as reprinted, and with members of the House for the first time really cognizant of its full purport, the last opportunity for any detailed discussion passed.

Last night, after the third reading had been moved, and the "debate" had been continued for some three minutes, Sir Robert Borden again gave notice of closure. To-day came the final wielding of the club.

Closure Put On.

Closure was instituted when the House met in the afternoon, on the motion of Premier Borden. It was adopted on division, the vote standing fifty-five to thirty-two, with Messrs. Hugh Guthrie and J. G. Turriff voting with the Government. Dr. Michael Clark was still absent from the Chamber. The debate upon the third reading of the measure then proceeded under the twenty-minute schedule.

Traitor Not Held in Honor.

"And this," declared Mr. Oliver, "is the Government that would expect Liberals to take share with it in administering the affairs of Canada. We have heard enough of this House the other day, and I have seen the Liberal members of the Government who supported the military service act. He declared that the twenty-seven Liberal members who supported the Government's conscription bill represented and stood sponsors for the people the Premier now proposed to disfranchise. Dr. Neely stated that the Premier had broken faith in presenting the present bill, and demanded: "What is the reason for this change of front?"

Why the Change of Front?

The resolutions of the Winnipeg Liberal Convention condemning the Borden Government's partisan war record of three years, and the rejection of the Turriff amendment to the Winnipeg win-the-war declaration, were, Dr. Neely said, put forward as the excuse for the Premier's change of front. He proposed to give the House and the country some information on that matter.

How Resolution Was Adopted.

The Liberal members of Parliament who believed in and supported conscription had, said Dr. Neely, held a conference in the precincts of the House shortly after the conscription bill was brought down. It adopted a resolution which was subsequently made the basis for the resolution of the Winnipeg convention. This resolution was given out to the press by Mr. Hugh Guthrie (South Wellington), while the fact was unequivocally implied there was purposely no direct reference to conscription. "This was by common consent, and at the special suggestion of Dr. Michael Clark of Red Deer," he was the man," said Dr. Neely, "who, in our little caucus in the precincts of this House, was absolutely set and opposed to having the word 'compulsion' or 'conscription' in the resolution, but desired to emphasize the idea of national service. It was because of that agreement reached by the Liberal members of this House who voted for the military service bill that the word 'compulsion' or 'conscription' was deliberately left out of the Western resolution, although the idea was implied in it."

Mr. Turriff Criticized.

In moving his amendment at Winnipeg Mr. Turriff, Dr. Neely charged, "deliberately—I will not say maliciously, Mr. Speaker, because you would then rule me out of order—broke faith with his colleagues on the Resolutions Committee at Winnipeg. His amendment could not be accepted, for the reason that we could not submit to its implication that we were passing a win-the-war resolution which did not mean everything it said."

Dr. Neely charged that Premier Borden by his present conduct had "negated the sincerity of every effort he had professed to make for

National war Government. It was no longer possible for him to secure co-operation from any but those "who no longer represent Liberalism in this House, and who have been supporting every autocratic measure this Government brings down." The most serious blow the Premier had dealt co-operation in the West was when he "sent Sir Clifford Sifton west to mobilize sentiment, with portfolios in his pocket to promise to certain Western Liberals."

The Premier jumped to his feet. "Sir Clifford Sifton," he exclaimed, "went West on his own initiative, nor had he any portfolios in his pocket to promise."

West's Short Faith, Long Memory.

"The country will be glad to know that," retorted Dr. Neely, "but we know that Sir Clifford Sifton had the blessing, if he did not have the endorsement and authority, of the Premier. I want to tell the Premier that the West has no use for Sir Clifford Sifton. It believes he has betrayed the West in 1911 and since. So far as he is concerned the West is short on faith and long on memory." Speaking during the night sitting Mr. Turriff announced that "despite the ill-natured remarks of my honorable friend from Humboldt, I propose to vote for his amendment." During the recent Saskatchewan elections, Mr. Turriff proceeded, he had condemned Colonel Currie's proposed franchise bill, which was along the lines of the present Government legislation. He desired to prove consistent and would support the Neely amendment.

Cries Shame, but Blames Liberals.

Mr. William Welchel, Conservative (North Waterloo), blamed the Government bill upon the Opposition because the latter had refused Parliamentary extension. He believed it to be a shame that men who had lived for years in Canada should be denied citizenship. He appealed to the Premier to do something.

A Modifying Order Announced.

Sir Robert Borden announced that an order in Council had been passed whereby certificates of naturalization would be granted under the legislation of 1914 to such Germans as may prove their character and residence to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State, Hon. Arthur Meighen.

Sir George Disowns Nationalists.

Sir George Foster admitted that, in his opinion, the franchise bill was in the long run not add much to the prospects of the Conservative party as a party in the years to come, but he justified the measure on the ground that it was needed to put "a present punch into the win-the-war efforts." Sir George repudiated the Nationalists and all their works, and pleaded that all honest men of true loyalty should unite behind the Conservative party. Inferentially, he argued, the men who were disfranchised because of their German sympathies would vote for the Liberals.

No Conservative Monopoly of Loyalty.

To this implication of disloyalty on the part of Liberalism throughout Canada Hon. Geo. P. Graham took emphatic exception. Mr. Graham has his only son at the front. "I can tell the Minister of Trade and Commerce," he declared, "and Liberal cheer, that he has no right to lecture us on loyalty. Where the heartstrings are torn we know what interest in the war means. I resent the implication that the Conservative party is the only loyal party. We have supported loyally every war measure of this Government. The history of Liberalism in Canada, as in England, shows what genuine loyalty means. It was a Liberal Government under Sir Wilfrid Laurier that took the first step towards closer union with the Motherland by granting the Imperial preference. It was the Laurier Government that, for the first time in the history of Canada, sent troops to aid the Motherland in war, and because of that very action some of the men who helped to put the present Government into power left our leader. There is no Grit or Tory so far as war sacrifice is concerned in this Dominion. My blood boils at the slur that is cast upon us in the speeches of men on the other side of the House, who are now degrading loyalty by making it a party cry for party purposes."

Do These Add a "Punch"?

As for putting "a punch into the war," Sir George Foster contended was the Government's aim. Mr. Graham caustically inquired if it was putting a punch into the war to spend tens of millions of the country's money in giving value to worthless Canadian Northern stock and in buying the Quebec & Saguenay Railway.

Closure Carried by 23.

The division bells rang within ten minutes after the House met this afternoon, the Opposition challenging Sir Robert Borden's motion for closure on the third reading of the war-time elections act. It provided "that this debate be not further adjourned."

The motion was adopted on a vote of 55 to 22, a Government majority of 23. Mr. Hugh Guthrie of South Wellington and Mr. J. G. Turriff of Assinibola voted with the Government. Dr. Michael Clark of Red Deer, who has been voting with the Government this session, was not present when the division was taken.

Government Distrusts People.

Ernest Lapointe, Liberal member for Kamouraska, who resumed the debate, said he desired to quote the statement of D'Israeli that a Conservative Government is "an organized hypocrisy." Mr. Lapointe characterized the bill as a disgraceful manipulation of the franchise designed to frustrate the will of the Canadian people. It constituted, he said, an expression of distrust in the Canadian people, and an indictment against the Government itself. The Government wanted to be judged by a family jury. The bill, Mr. Lapointe went on to say, was designed to create a military caste, and it would bring about a condition fraught with grave dangers to the country. It would create a state of affairs which would not be tolerated by any self-respecting people in the world. He appealed to the Prime Minister to take steps even now to prevent these things taking place.

Mr. Lapointe maintained that un-

fair distinctions should not have been made in granting the franchise to women. The alien enemy restrictions, he said, were designed to penalize people who had left their native countries to escape oppression and who had come to Canada in the belief that it was a free land. These people would have to carry their share of the burdens imposed upon the country by this Government, but they would be denied representation in Parliament.

In closing Mr. Lapointe asserted that the people of Canada like fair play, and they would resent this last desperate act of a despotic Government.

Worst Anti-war Men Not Touched.

W. E. Knowles of Moose Jaw said that Parliament was being asked for miserable political reasons to break a pledge given to naturalized citizens in the name of the King. These privileges were being taken away, he said, for "the same reason that a robbing will pilage things that do not belong to him, namely, his own personal aggrandizement." Sir Robert Borden had stated that he had not one word to say against the citizens it was proposed to disfranchise. Mr. Knowles thought that the men who have been holding anti-conscription meetings are stronger opponents of the war than the people who came from Bourassa countries. There was Henri Bourassa and members of the Government who had opposed participation by Canada in Britain's war, but it was not proposed to disfranchise them. Mr. Knowles said that the men who would be disfranchised in the West are Liberals, not because they are against the allies, but because they believe in free trade and other Liberal policies. The bill, he said, was for the perpetuation of the Conservative party, and the Government was ashamed of it. Its principles, if generally adopted, would knock the bottom out of democracy.

Injustice to Allied Women.

Hon. Charles Marcell opposed the bill on the ground that it was opposed to the past history of Canada as well as its present and future interest. The bill, he said, was a natural sequel to the military service act, which had divided the country during the war issues. The Province of Quebec was opposed to the military service law, but they would obey it until its repeal has been brought about. That great injustice would be done to hundreds of French and Belgian women in Quebec was the next argument advanced by Mr. Marcell. These women are the wives and relatives of French and Belgian reservists who settled in Quebec, whose men-folk have been fighting in France. Mr. Marcell, after referring to the fact that a number of Liberals had voted for the conscription bill, expressed his pleasure that they had returned to the party fold, and were making a fight to maintain the sanctity of British citizenship.

Stumbling Block to Unity.

Hon. Frank Oliver said the bill would put a stumbling block in the way of securing unity of the people in the future. It would accentuate diversities of race. Divisions of race during the past fifty years had done more harm to Canada than anything else, and those divisions were to be continued and perpetuated.

Thought Bill "Damnable."

Dr. Neely ended his speech by declaring that the bill was "unjust, un-British, autocratic, and damnable to the last degree."

There were loud cries of "Order" and "Take it back." The speaker requested Dr. Neely to withdraw his last adjective.

Dr. Neely will withdraw it, but I must say that I looked it up in Webster, and I found that "damnable" meant "worthy of condemnation." I thought the bill was worthy of condemnation.

"Perhaps then it would be better to say worthy of condemnation," remarked the speaker.

Dr. Neely then moved that the bill be not now read a third time, but that it be referred again to Committee of the Whole and instructions given to amend it by eliminating from it "all such provisions as tend to remove the franchise from any class of his Majesty's subjects who are now qualified electors according to the laws of the Province in which they reside." The amendment was seconded by Mr. Sinclair.

Worthy of the Kaiser.

L. J. Gauthier, St. Hyacinthe, thought the bill was worthy of the German Kaiser, except that it was unjust to the Kaiser to make the comparison. The Kaiser believed that might was right, but at any rate he had the courage to state so openly.

Regards It as Win-the-war Measure.

Mr. Turriff of Assinibola said he looked upon the franchise bill as more or less a win-the-war measure. At this there was an outburst of laughter from the Liberal side, and one member shouted, "You mean win-the-election."

Mr. Turriff—"It is not necessary for anyone to put words into my mouth. He added, however, that he could see no reason for disfranchising anyone, and would support Dr. Neely's amendment. "This bill," he went on, "is more or less a party bill. It cannot help but be. I think I am fair in saying that it has been brought in more for winning the war than for any advantage for the Conservative party, because if my friends on the other side think that this bill will help them win elections for many years in the West they are laboring under a delusion. Whose fault is it? The leader of the Government has made every effort to have union and National Government. I think a much better measure could have been brought in."

Denies Breaking Faith.

Mr. Turriff added that he did not think a National Government would have brought in such a measure. He was protesting against references made early in the discussion to "Judah," when Mr. Oliver arose to his feet with a disavowal of having used any such term in regard to a member differing on a question of principle. "I think," Mr. Oliver said, "my honorable friend's conscience is troubling him."

Mr. Turriff protested against the charge made by Dr. Neely of having broken faith with conscription Liberals. Mr. Turriff denied having done anything of the kind, and again asserted his intention of voting for the Neely amendment.

Germans and Naturalization.

Mr. W. H. Nickle of Kingston dwelt at some length on the provisions of the German naturalization laws. He said that the German naturalized abroad since 1913 might still retain his German citizenship, with the consent of the German authorities. Further, if naturalized prior to that date, he could be readmitted to German citizenship on satisfying the German authorities of his business capacity and of the fact that he had led an irreproachable life. Mr. Nickle claimed, therefore, that at the present time a man who might still be a German citizen under German law should not be given the franchise in Canada.

Hon. Dr. Pugsley—Would not the

to become re-naturalized apply to those very worthy gentlemen whom the Prime Minister has engaged to naturalize by order in Council?

Mr. Nickle—It certainly could. But I am satisfied with what Mr. Weichel said in regard to those who have been here for twenty-five years.

"I am prepared to take chances with them. The men with whom I am not prepared to take chances are those who came here within the last ten years."

Mr. Nickle strongly advocated the vote for female relatives of soldiers. He regarded the bill as part of the win-the-war policy, and he felt that those whose sympathy was with the British Empire should have the say as to the Government which should be in power at the next election.

A Far-fetched Argument.

Mr. D. D. McKenzie (Cape Breton) thought the argument that the bill was a part of the win-the-war policy was a far-fetched one. Mr. McKenzie could not bring himself to regard the naturalized alien as a sort of Jekyll and Hyde. Mr. McKenzie regarded the position taken by Mr. Nickle and the promise made by Sir Robert were irreconcilable, and he claimed that the Government had broken faith with the women of Canada.

Sir Wilfrid then continued the discussion of the measure before the House. The indictment, he said, which he made against the policy of the Government was that it was a

breach of faith. The exclusion which it was sought to make of men who for the last fifteen years we had recognized as fellow-countrymen was an absolute and unwarranted breach of faith. Was it right, that, by naturalization, the rights of citizenship to men of alien enemy birth we should set aside one of these privileges? The only reason these men were being disfranchised now was because they were mistrusted. One reason given for this action was because the Government thought that the ties of blood were so strong as to make them sympathetic to the cause of Canada's enemies. The ties of blood were strong, said Sir Wilfrid, but he thought the ties of home were stronger. These men had made their homes in Canada. They

had been told that they would have all privileges here. Now we suddenly turned around and said that we could not trust them.

"There is everything to be gained by trusting people," he said, "and nothing to lose."

Sir Geo. Foster, who followed, declared that there was in Canada an effective war party and an ineffective war party.