

CLOSURE RULE ENDS TALK ON THE SECOND READING OF NEW FRANCHISE BILL

Government Has Majority of Thirteen When Vote Taken — No Disorderly Scenes When Debate Ends Early This Morning — Two Amendments By Opposition — Leaders Speak.

The great battle that was predicted in the Commons over the war franchise bill did not materialize. Nobody had to be carried out by husky policemen, there was no wholesale exodus of Liberal members when the closure was applied, there was no scene at all except of the most orderly and sedate description. The Government majority was thirteen on the vote taken shortly after two this morning.

An amendment to the second reading of the bill was moved by Sir Wilfrid Laurier. It demanded the utilization of the provincial franchise for Federal purposes. It was a straight party division, for those Liberals who had declared their support of the Government measure were not in the House, and the amendment was defeated by 46 to 34, a Government majority of 12. This vote was taken at 1 o'clock.

No sooner was the vote taken than Hon. William Pugsley moved another amendment declaring that the disfranchisement of certain voters and the limitation of the woman franchise to the relatives of soldiers was not in the public interest. This amendment was defeated by 47 to 34, a Government majority of 13. The vote was taken shortly after 2 o'clock this morning when the closure rule ended the debate.

Both Leaders Speak.

The features of the debate were the twenty minute speeches by Sir Robert Borden and Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The Opposition Leader, who rose at 4 o'clock declared himself as emphatically opposed to the proposed legislation. He objected to the plan to alter the provincial franchise, by providing that an important class of subjects had been denied the privileges they now enjoy.

Sir Robert Borden in reply said that the leader of the Opposition was responsible for the war time election that had been forced upon the country. It could not be seriously supposed, he said, that Canadian citizens of alien enemy birth should be sent to the trenches to fight men of their own blood. Having taken the position that naturalized citizens of enemy birth should not be sent to the front, we should not, said Sir Robert, call upon them to pronounce judgment upon the matters which will be to the fore in this election. In regard to the votes for women, the Prime Minister said, that it would be desirable to change the naturalization laws, before giving them the vote generally. This because, a woman of foreign birth who marries a British subject becomes a British subject.

A number of western Liberals who voted for conscription including W. A. Buchanan, of Medicine Hat, and Dr. Neely, of Humboldt, opposed the bill while it was approved by Mr. Guthrie, Liberal member for North Wellington.

A Division in Six Minutes.

Immediately the House opened, Sir Robert Borden proposed, seconded by Sir George Foster, that the orders be now read. Sir Wilfrid Laurier asked what was the reason for the motion. Sir Robert replied that it was proposed to proceed with the franchise bill. "It is a very important order," said Sir

Wilfrid. "We have no objection from this side."

Sir Robert Borden, seconded by Sir George Foster, that the House proceed with the franchise bill. Again there was no objection from the Opposition, although Mr. Knowles rose to explain his position in regard to a private bill. He was however, interrupted by the Speaker who remarked the motion before the House was not debatable.

Sir George Foster moved, seconded by Hon. Mr. Cochrane that the debate on the second reading of the franchise bill be not further adjourned. To this, there was loud opposition from the Liberal side, and at 3.11 p.m. or within about six minutes of the opening of the House the first division was taken. The motion carried by 48 to 23, Mr. Guthrie the Liberal member for South Wellington voting with the Government as he voted on Saturday. During the announcement of the pairs, Mr. Turriff had a declaration to make which amused the House. "I was not paired," he informed the Speaker, "and I intended to vote for the motion, but I was not paying any intention."

Calls It German Law.

Mr. Sinclair, of Guysboro, then continued the debate on the second reading. He asked what would become of the franchise if the Solicitor-General were to be permitted to twist and bedevil it any further. The action of the Government in introducing the bill was similar to that of the Germans, in South West Africa, when they planned to beat the British forces by poisoning all the wells. It was a Prussian Junker Act. The idea was military autocracy, Canadian military rule would not be one bit better than German military rule. It was only a question of degree. He referred to Mr. Meighen as the "modern Kruger from Portage la Prairie."

"This bill," continued Mr. Sinclair, "is a direct insult to the memory of the men who died in South Africa." The Government, Mr. Sinclair went on, had grown chicken hearted and was afraid to face its opponents in fair fight. The Canadian soldier exhibited no such craven spirit. Could any one imagine the Canadian soldier—

But just here, the Speaker rose to his feet, and informed Mr. Sinclair that his 20 minutes were up.

Dr. Edwards, of Frontenac, denied that the franchise was being taken from any women in Canada. The franchise, he said, could not be taken from a million women as was claimed by the previous speaker, for the reason that they did not possess it.

Dr. Edwards asked whether it was proper that the party should be put in power which was not in sympathy with British institutions and as prepared to keep faith with the boys overseas by sending them the resources they needed.

Sir Wilfrid Speaks.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, after a reference to franchise laws since Confederation, argued that provincial franchises had given full satisfaction. The Secretary of State, he went on, had rather agreed in principle with the provincial franchise for election to the House of Commons, but though he agreed with the principle, Hon. Mr. Meighen had proceeded to stab the provincial franchise in three particulars. In the first place, the franchise which existed in the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia, made no distinction at all between class and class, was the franchise of every British subject. By this bill however, it was provided that an important class should be denied the privileges they now enjoyed in every one of those provinces.

"It is not true" Mr. Meighen interposed, "that the provincial franchise laws, of the west, make no distinction of race and that all British subjects have the right to vote. As a matter of fact, they do make distinctions of race and all British subjects have not the right to vote."

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, so far as Manitoba goes, there is no distinction whatever. Every man who is a British subject is a voter. If that is not the case, what is the use of this bill? Why does it provide that British subjects who have become British subjects since March 31st, 1902 shall no longer be electors after this bill becomes law? That is the one thing to which I object."

As Mr. Meighen rose again there were loud cries of order from the Opposition side, "You are taking up the time" shouted Hon. Mr. Pugsley.

Hon. Mr. Meighen, "In the Province of Saskatchewan, Chinese subjects have not the right to vote."

Plea From The Foreigner.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, "If my hon. friend will permit me that is very specious. Chinese and Japanese are not voters, but the Germans and Austrians are voters and have been voters since 1902, or from the time they were naturalized. The object of my hon. friend is to take away from these men of foreign origin the rights and privileges of British subjects which have been freely granted to them by the provinces I have mentioned. That is what I am blaming him for. He is introducing a new principle, violating the franchise, granted by his own province, to these men. And, for what reason? Because forsooth, they are of foreign origin. Because they may have been born in Germany or Austria, or Turkey, they are not supposed to be unable to give an unbiased verdict upon the questions before us. For my part, I do not admit that doctrine at all. I do not admit the doctrine that when a man leaves Europe and comes to this country, when he swears allegiance to the King, when he becomes a private citizen of Canada, when he builds a home for himself and his family, I am not prepared to believe that if a conflict arises between the land of that man's birth and the land of his adoption that he will go back upon the land to which he has sworn allegiance."

Wouldn't Turn Traitor.

Sir Wilfrid continued that he could well believe that men of German origin who had become British subjects might be suffering agony; but he was not prepared to believe that they would turn traitor to the land of their adoption, in favor of the land of their birth. "They have given up the land of their birth," he declared, "because conditions there were not satisfactory to them, because they were living in tyranny. Their govern-

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ment would not respect its pledges and they came to a land which they were taught and were told would hold sacred whatever promises were made to them. If you tell me that in a conflict between Germany and Great Britain, these men will turn traitor upon the land in which they have enjoyed freedom and happiness I am not prepared to believe it. There may be cases, here and there of men who will do it, but that the great mass of the people will do it, is something I do not believe."

Sir Wilfrid added that not a single word had been heard in Parliament, so far as he knew, or outside of it, that German settlers who had come to the western provinces since March, 1902, have not behaved as true British citizens. For every German settler in Canada there were 100 settlers of German origin in the United States. But the United States had not taken the drastic, the humiliating course which Parliament was asked to take. The American Government through its honor had trusted every man who had sworn allegiance to American institutions. "It is reserved for this Parliament," Sir Wilfrid said, "to be asked to deny everything, which up to this time has been held sacred, that is to say the honor of the British Crown given to

these men, the promise made to them every one of them, that they would be respected in everything, in all the privileges of a British subject."

Sir Wilfrid quoted the naturalization pledge given to an alien on his becoming a Canadian citizen. It reads in part "naturalized as a British subject and is within Canada entitled to all political and other rights, powers and privileges, and subject to all obligations to which natural born British subjects are entitled or are subject."

Looking to Russia.

This was the pledge, Sir Wilfrid went on, which the Government was proposing to set at naught. The men to be disfranchised would be mainly Slavs, Moravians, Galicians, Ruthenians, and Bukowinians. Men of Slav origin who had for years and centuries been tossed about in their allegiance. They were today Austrians by force of law, but their heart was not with Austria. They were rather looking towards Russia in the hope, perhaps, not that they would become Russians but that their States would become independent. By their allegiance these men were in full sympathy with the cause for which Canadians were fighting.

Further, not satisfied with taking away the franchise from these na-

turalized British subjects, it was proposed to take away the franchise from the women of Canada, in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. The Minister of Justice had expressed the opinion on a previous occasion that the women of these provinces would not be entitled to vote in Dominion elections.

If they were not entitled to vote, then it should be the duty of the House of Commons to give them the right to vote. The only proper way would be to give the franchise to all women. Sir Wilfrid was willing to give all credit due to female relatives of soldiers, but, he said, there were thousands of women who might have had no relatives at the front, but had done all that it was possible for them to do in order to help the cause. The only thing they had not done was this: They had not gone to the trenches, but they had gone as near the trenches as it was possible for them to go. Many of them had ventured far in order to render assistance and comfort to those wounded on the battlefield, and should they not have the same rights and privileges as those who might have a brother or a member of their family fighting for the Empire? The measure was one which could not

be accepted by a free Parliament. "We are in favor of advancing," Sir Wilfrid declared, "and we are not in favor of retrograding."

Likes American Way.

The United States Congress, he said, made more preparation for war in six months than Canada did perhaps in three years. They looked over the whole field, and covered it, but never thought of disfranchising anyone, even when the country was overrun by German spies. "I am sorry," Sir Wilfrid concluded, "to have to take the position which I have taken on this point. I have been supporting the Government on the war up to the present session. I am sorry that the occasion arose when, during this session, I have to discontinue my support of the Government on a measure of great importance. I am sorry that I have again to dissent from the Government on this issue. But I believe, and we shall be judged some day by our actions, that in this instance the Government is taking the step which will cause serious injury to the country, and, therefore, actuated by these sentiments, I beg to move, seconded by Hon. Mr. Pugsley, that "This bill be not now read a second time, but that it be resolved that the

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bridgment by this Parliament of the electoral franchise now enjoyed in any province of the Dominion, by any class of His Majesty's subjects, would be contrary to the peace, order and good government of Canada!"

The Premier Corrects Him.

Sir Robert Borden argued that Sir Wilfrid Laurier was seriously astray in some of his assertions. It was not true that all naturalized British subjects in the four western provinces had the right to vote. Sir Wilfrid also seemed to be under the impression that women who had gone overseas as nurses in the Canadian expeditionary force had not the right to vote. "I beg to assure him that all members of the C. E. F., whether men or women, have the right to vote at the forthcoming elections. Not only is that the case, but the female relatives of such women in this country also have the right to vote." As to the interpretation of the Dominion Elections Act, the Minister of Justice, the Solicitor-General and all the legal authorities whom the Government had consulted entertained an opinion directly opposite to that to which Sir Wilfrid Laurier stood sponsor.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier had called to his aid the example of the United States. But the United States had held no elections since it entered the war. Nor could Sir Wilfrid offer anything to Canada from the example of the United States until he was able to point to their actions and the conditions similar to those which confronted Canada at present. Sir Wilfrid had altogether omitted the well-known fact that Australia had given an example of legislation of precisely the same character except that the Canadian Government had not gone as far as Australia.

The Effort of the States.

"My right honorable friend has seen fit," Sir Robert continued, "for what reason I do not know, to disparage this country by stating that the United States had done more in four or five months—I suppose he means precautionally—than this country has done in three years. I desire to take the most emphatic issue with him on that point. I do not understand the motive which led him to make an assertion of that kind, having regard to his responsibility as a public man and to the position which he occupies in this House and in the country. I desire to draw no comparisons. I fully realize the splendid effort that the United States is making in this war. I have heard many accounts of it in recent days. They are making a magnificent effort. There is no doubt about that. They are going into it in a splendid whole-hearted way with a view to achieving the victory which we all desire. I should like to tell my honorable friend, if he does not know it, he ought to know it,—that if the United States had made the same proportionate effort in this war that Canada made in the first few months after war broke out in 1914, she would have raised within six weeks after she entered the war an army of 500,000 men, she would have had that army on the ocean en route to France."

No Fight, No Vote.

This was a war-time election which the leader of the Opposition had forced upon the country. So far as the disqualification of aliens of enemy nationality was concerned, there was some considerations that Sir Wilfrid had not taken into account. Was it seriously proposed that these men should be sent to the front line trenches to fight men of their own blood. If they were to be called upon to pronounce judgment upon the issue of war, in the election, would Sir Wilfrid shrink from declaring that they ought to be subject to military service, the same as other citizens of Canada.

"If he takes the one position," Sir Robert declared, "it seems to me that he should take the other. He has taken care, however, not to put that forward, for reasons which are very obvious."

Cruel to Send Them.

It would be cruel to send naturalized enemy aliens to the front, Sir Robert proceeded, because naturalization which might obtain in Canada did not follow them after they left the limits of the Dominion. If they were sent to the front line trenches and captured by the German and Austrian troops they might be shot. On the whole naturalized aliens in the country had acted in a reasonable and orderly manner. But no one could doubt that they did have certain sympathy with enemy troops. If the Government were disposed to send them to the front, the military authorities would not permit it. Who could undertake to say that in some individual instances a man's intense sympathy for his own flesh and blood might not overcome his loyalty to his adopted country. "If my right hon. friend," Sir Robert said, "had seen some of the telegrams that I saw in regard to what happened to some of the New Zealand troops overseas 18 months ago he would perhaps realize that considerations of this kind are entitled to more weight than he has been inclined to give them."

"What is to be the issue in this election? It is to be upon this war. Upon Canada's part in this war? Upon the necessity of sending reinforcements to our men overseas who are holding there the first battle line of Canada? The question is as to Canada's efforts. If these citizens by their origin, by their early environment, by the ties of kinship, by their natural sympathies, cannot be forced into the front line to fight, for precisely the same reason they ought not to be called upon to pronounce judgment upon the issues which will be to the fore in this election. They do not want to be forced into combatant service; more than that, I have reason to believe from state-

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ments that have come to me from most reliable sources, that a very large number of these men will be grateful for being exempted from compulsory military service on the one hand and for not being called upon to pronounce their judgment in this election on the other."

The Women's Side.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Sir Robert continued had developed a very deep and sudden sympathy for granting the franchise to the women of Canada. The Prime Minister contended that the women of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, were not entitled to vote at federal elections. Therefore, the bill would not deprive these women of a vote. The question of conferring the franchise on all the women of Canada was surrounded with a great many difficulties and perplexities which could not be solved within the four weeks comprising the life time of this Parliament. One consideration was that the citizenship of a married woman was not dependent upon any individual application on her behalf for naturalization. Her citizenship with one trifling exception which became law for the first time in 1914 was dependent upon the citizenship of her husband. What was the remedy? If a woman was to have an equal status with a man in the franchise, was it not a reasonable thing that she should have an equal voice in determining what her citizenship should be? This would imply amendments to the naturalization law, and this could not be accomplished in the remaining weeks of Parliament.

The Men Disfranchised.

The principle upon which the Government had proceeded was that of service and sacrifice. 300,000 men of the best that Canada could produce had gone overseas. It would depend entirely upon military operations as to how many of those men would have an opportunity to vote and it was beyond question that many thousands of them would not have the opportunity. "More than that," Sir Robert continued, "30,000 of them lie buried in France and in Flanders, and is it not right that the immediate relatives of these men should have some voice to speak on their behalf when the issues at the next election come to be determined? There are also some thousands of these men prisoners in Germany, undergoing hardships and privation, to whom it is impossible to give the opportunity to vote at the impending election. Is it not right that some one in this country should have the opportunity to speak on their behalf? There are thousands of these men in the British or allied forces who are residents in Canada and would have had the right to vote at the next election except for this war and the service they are giving. And I think it right that some person in this country should speak in their behalf."

"These are the reasons and the considerations which have impelled the Government to propose this measure to Parliament. It is the voice speaking on behalf of the men who are serving the country overseas, and on behalf of those who will serve it in the future and on behalf of those who have died in order that Canada might live."

A Broken Pledge.

Mr. W. A. Buchanan, of Lethbridge, followed Sir Robert. He opened his speech by saying that he was one of the Liberals who had voted with the Government on the Military Service Bill. In his constituency were many citizens who would be disfranchised by the present measure. He had gone to these people, told them the story of Canada and Great Britain in the war, and urged them to remain loyal to their adopted country. If this bill passed he would have to tell them that Canada had broken her solemn pledge. They had done their part. They had made no trouble. They had been peaceable and law-abiding citizens. Women were working in munitions factories here in Canada, he added. Others were driving automobile trucks and doing other war work. They should be given the vote too.

Hon. Arthur Meighen said that the members of the Opposition seemed to be laboring under the impression that this was a disfranchisement measure. It was not in fact, he declared, it was the widest enfranchisement measure ever passed by a British Parliament since the Reform Bill, when population was considered. The Government's only motive in introducing it was to safeguard the franchise at a time of danger. He failed to see why the western conscriptionist Liberals should be dissatisfied with the bill. It applied to them in identically the same way as it did to Conservatives.

It was said that this was a partisan measure, continued Mr. Meighen. This statement was based on the theory that those who were granted the vote by this measure would support the Government, while those who were disfranchised would, if they had the vote, reject the Government. Then I accept the compromise, said Mr. Meighen. I do believe that those who want to win the war would support us, and those who do not would oppose us.

Dr. Neely's Break.

Dr. Neely of Humboldt, said that the Solicitor General by this bill, had handed out an insult to hundreds of his constituents. While willing to recognize the ability of the Solicitor General, it was necessary for him to say that he never saw Mr. Meighen make such a shameface performance as he did on the day he introduced this measure.

Speaker Rhodes expressed the opinion that Dr. Neely was exceeding the rules of the debate.

"Dr. Neely remarked that in view of what was contemplated in regard to many of his constituents who were as loyal as any of the people of Canada, it was difficult in expressing an opinion to keep within the rules.

The Speaker again intervened and Dr. Neely said, "Well I have said what I want to and if you are willing, I will pass on."

Sir George Foster expressed the opinion that Dr. Neely should formally withdraw his remarks.

The member for Humboldt said he was willing to observe the rulings of the chair but he did not want to be lectured by the Minister of Trade and Commerce.

Speaker Rhodes "I took it as a withdrawal, when the member for Humboldt said he would pass on."

"If loyalty means support of the Government," Dr. Neely continued "the Solicitor General will find in the coming general elections that there are hundreds of thousands of voters who can be branded as disloyal."

Hon. Geo. P. Graham declared that the bill would unjustly affect many men in Ontario who had been here for as long as 40 years, and who enjoyed the franchise though they had failed to comply with the formality of becoming naturalized. These men were first class citizens.

Mr. Graham declared that he was in accord with the granting of the franchise to the female relatives

of the soldiers. But he was not in favor in disfranchising those who had no relatives to go but who had done all they could for the war. The washerwomen, who contributed her 30 cents a month to the patriotic fund was doing all she could, and should not be discriminated because she had no relatives at the front.

"The women want honesty in public affairs," said Mr. Graham. "They are watching the conduct of public affairs, and the Government will find when an election comes that this bill will have the reverse effect than that expected."

W. B. Bennett—"Where are you going to run?"

Mr. Graham—"Well, I am not trying to run for the Senate, anyway. I will run where there is a fight."

Mr. Bennett—"I have had the honor of representing one seat for 26 years, and never had to change it, anyway."

Too Free With Naturalization.

W. F. Maclean, South York, favored the bill on its merits and because of the necessity of the war. If Parliament had had what it should have had, namely, the right to extend its own life, this bill would not have been necessary. He believed, under the circumstances, that it would be justified by the people he represented. Canada had been too free in regard to her naturalization law. It must be rewritten at a later date.

A. K. Maclean, of Halifax, remarked: "I say that this legislation is objectionable in principle, and I deny that there is anything to justify its introduction. I say that public sentiment is not behind it today, and will be even more opposed to it as time proceeds. Reason and justice clearly point out our duty, having regard to the future and the good name of Canada. We must oppose this measure. It was not founded on any principle, and violates without cause a contract. It will leave a legacy of distrust among the people who are here, and the people who may come, and will perpetuate war politics after the war."

Mr. Guthrie for the Bill.

Mr. Hugh Guthrie, Liberal member for South Wellington, declared his intention of voting for the measure. It was not, he said, possible to poll the full soldiers' vote. The men who had died, been taken prisoners or were wounded were entitled to be represented at the polls, and if the bill did not receive support of both sides of the House, it ought to have it.

Mr. J. M. Douglas, (Strathcona) said he came from a constituency in which were to be found a great many so-called alien enemies. These people, however, were certainly not enemies. By no act, he declared, had they ever shown the slightest disloyalty to Canada, Great Britain or the cause of the Allies. If the franchise was to be granted on the basis of war service, a large number of people in Eastern Canada should, in his opinion, be disfranchised before the vote was taken from these honest, frugal, peaceable people.

Mr. D. D. Mackenzie opened h^{is}

speech by remarking that the Government had seen fit to bring in closure two hours after the discussion of the Bill was opened. In his opinion there should have been at least a day of grace before this was done.

Mederic's Prediction.

Mayor Martin of Montreal, declared that while the aim of the measure was to assist the Government in the elections, it would be found to favor the Opposition. The mother of a soldier who had not received her allowance would not be inclined to vote Conservative.

"I have not been in favor of the vote for women," Mayor Martin went on, "but if you are going to give the vote to a section of women you must give it to all the women. The returned soldiers will vote against the Government. The men in the trenches will vote against the Government. I know something of their views. Many returned soldiers come to see me as Mayor of Montreal, and I am speaking in the name of the metropolis of Canada."

"You will be kicked out of office," Mayor Martin prophesied. "You are trying to govern without the people."

R. B. Bennett of Calgary, contended that on great national issues, when the life or death of the state was at issue, nationals only should have the vote.

Drags in Northcliffe.

Hon. Charles Murphy remarked that synchronously with the action of the Government in bringing in closure, was the presence, on the floor of the House, of Lord Northcliffe, who, he stated, has wrecked the Liberal party in England and driven Asquith from the Cabinet. It was singularly appropriate, said Mr. Murphy, that Lord Northcliffe should have been present at the second reading of a so-called franchise bill which was designed to thwart the people's will.