

LIBERALS TRY TO FIND WHAT BILL MEANS

Devote Their Limited Time for Discussion to Few Aspects of Act

POWERS OF ENUMERATORS

Measure Has to be Reprinted—Secretary Promises to Consider Suggestions.

(Staff Correspondence of The Globe.)
Ottawa, Sept 11.—With Parliament definitely committed through the brute-force majority and the closure steam roller to the principle of the Government's franchise bill, with its class enfranchising and disfranchising provisions, Liberals in Parliament to-day devoted the limited time at their disposal before the gag is again applied in trying to find out just what the bill means in detail.

Although there are fourteen printed pages in the measure, there are only four clauses, thus making the application of closure a little more speedy than if it had been divided up into more clauses, each one of which would have to be discussed at something like reasonable length in the committee stage before the closure notice could be given.

Knowing that the axe would fall at any moment, strictly limiting further discussion of each clause, the Opposition in the Commons to-day endeavored to cover as much ground as possible and to obtain as much information as possible as to what the act really meant, particularly in regard to the machinery provided for the preparation of the new Dominion lists.

Difficult to Understand Quickly.

Understanding the complicated details of the bill was made more difficult because it is printed without any marginal notes or explanatory references to the clauses of the Dominion elections act, which it amends, these clauses being referred to simply by numbers. Consequently the members had to work out the meaning of each amendment by studiously comparing the new measure with the bulky Dominion elections act, and in the brief time at their disposal since the bill was printed a clear idea of exactly what the new machinery involves was almost impossible.

Powers of Enumerators.

Apart from the further consideration of the general question as to the enfranchisement of the female next of kin of overseas soldiers, and the disfranchisement of citizens of alien enemy birth, attention was centered to-day on the particular parts of the measure dealing with the arbitrary powers of the enumerators to add names to or strike off names from the present Provincial lists.

Three Dangerous Features.

It was pointed out that these enumerators, who would almost undoubtedly be partisan appointees, would be likely to apply their powers so as to enfranchise as many women voters as possible who would be likely to vote for the Government, and to disfranchise as many aliens as possible known to be political supporters of the Opposition. The enumerators are required under the bill to post the new lists ten days before polling, the shortness of the time between posting and polling making it extremely difficult for candidates to make any thorough canvass of the amended lists. Furthermore, no appeal is allowed from the decisions of the enumerators, although on polling day any woman whose name has not been added to the lists may be allowed a tentative vote on certificate, but that vote is counted only in case of a general recount for the constituency, and on being allowed by the recount Judge. Similarly any "conscientious objector," or anyone declared by the enumerator to be of alien enemy birth and not naturalized prior to March 31, 1902, may also vote, but that vote too goes into the "tied" class.

Suggestions to Insure Confidence.

The power these provisions put into the hands of unscrupulous enumerators was duly emphasized by the

Opposition to-day. The suggestion was made by Hon. George P. Graham, Duncan Ross, F. B. Carvell and others that public confidence in the honest working out of the act might be secured and proper safeguards supplied by having the new lists prepared by the present municipal machinery, through municipal Clerks, etc., and by providing some method of appeal before polling day, instead of leaving the whole machinery, as at present contemplated, arbitrarily in the hands of partisan enumerators for each polling subdivision.

The Secretary of State promised to consider the suggestions made, but little hope was held out of any amendments along the lines suggested.

Provincial Basis Proposal Defeated.

The House worked in committee upon the bill all day. One amendment by Dr. D. B. Neely was submitted to a vote. It proposed that in the five Provinces where women had been granted the franchise by the Provinces they should have the right to cast their ballots. This was lost on a straight party division, Messrs. Guthrie, Turfiff and Clark (Red Deer) being absent.

Bill Has to be Reprinted.

Many suggestions were submitted, but the Government made it manifest that it does not intend to materially modify or alter the existing form of the measure. That the bill is not clearly or unequivocally drawn had to be conceded early in the discussion, and, after promising consideration to several Opposition suggestions having in view the meaning of clauses, Premier Borden and Hon. Mr. Meighen, who were jointly in charge of the bill, made the announcement that it would be necessary to have it reprinted. This will be done during the night, so that the reprinted bills may be ready for to-morrow's sitting. The House again sat until a late hour.

Notice of Closure Given.

When the House adjourned at one o'clock this (Wednesday) morning Premier Borden gave notice of closure to-morrow. Mr. F. B. Carvell protested against the application of closure to committee consideration of the bill at this stage.

Premier Borden replied that he had conferred with Hon. George P. Graham, who was leading the Opposition at the time, and with Chief Liberal Whip Fred Pardee. He hoped, as a result of the conference, it would not be necessary to apply the closure, but proposed to give the necessary notice of it.

Protests Against Making Terms.

Mr. L. A. Lapointe (Montreal) jumped to his feet with a fervid and dramatic protest against the Liberal representatives making any terms with the Premier.

"Let him go on his closure and jam it through and take the responsibility," cried Mr. Lapointe.

Without further discussion the House adjourned.

Wish to Avoid By-elections.

Immediately upon the opening of the House this afternoon the Prime Minister moved the House into committee on the war-time elections bill.

Hon. Arthur Meighen stated in reply to W. E. Knowles of Moose Jaw that it had not been contemplated that the military voters act would apply to by-elections, although legally it would.

Mr. Knowles pointed out that almost invariably there were by-elections after a general election. New Ministers would have to go back to their constituencies for re-election.

Mr. Meighen said it was hoped to avoid the tremendous task of holding by-elections in war-time. "The best way would be not to have any Ministers defeated," he said humorously.

"Better put that in the act," suggested Hon. Charles Murphy.

What is "Complete Demobilization"?

Sir Wilfrid Laurier inquired as to the exact definition of the term "complete demobilization." Mr. Meighen replied that to his mind complete demobilization took place when all the men were released from their military obligations. However, he would secure the legal definition.

Wider Franchise for Women Asked.

Dr. Neely of Humboldt asked that the Government enlarge the scope of the franchise further. Naturalization difficulties, he said, should not stand in the way of a more complete franchise to women. By this legislation many women who were British-born and engaged in war work would be shut out.

Mr. Meighen said that the difficulty of naturalization was only one of the difficulties. He knew of nowhere else to draw this line than by giving the mothers, wives and daughters of soldiers the vote. The purpose was to make the vote a representative vote for the soldiers overseas.

Mr. G. E. McCraney urged that the Government extend the franchise to the women of the country in the same way as is done to men. The effect of the present law was to multiply the effect of men's votes.

Women Led to Expect Federal Vote.

Hon. Dr. Pugsley said that, as far as he could see, one purpose of the measure was to give women the vote on the basis of service, and not so much because they would represent the men at the front.

Hon. Arthur Meighen—For both reasons.

Dr. Pugsley thought that women who had given valuable service at home should be enfranchised. The Premier, he said, had declared that the provisions of the naturalization law were an obstacle to doing this. But surely this difficulty could be overcome. Dr. Pugsley went on to say that the Premier had placed himself on record as being in favor of granting the suffrage to all women, and had even moved an amendment that this matter be considered by Parliament before an election. Now, however, the Premier saw a fanciful reason for delay. Personally, he thought that wo-

men should be given the vote before the close of the present session. If not all Canadian women could be enfranchised, at any rate the vote should be given to British-born women. Dr. Pugsley read a telegram from the United Suffrage Socialists of British Columbia protesting against the bill as drafted, and asking that they be granted the Federal franchise. He concluded by saying that the Premier had led the women of Canada to believe that they would be given the Dominion franchise and that they were expecting it.

Naturalization Obstacle.

Sir Robert Borden again brought forward the naturalization law as an insurmountable obstacle to granting the franchise to all Canadian women. Dealing with the suggestion of the former speaker, that all women of British birth should be granted the right to vote, he said that such action would constitute the very gravest discrimination against women of other nationalities residing in Canada. Sir Wilfrid Laurier had urged that the bill as drafted discriminated against these people, but if the suggestion of Dr. Pugsley were adopted it would be much worse.

Premier Still for General Suffrage.

The Premier said that he adhered to the opinion that women were entitled to the general franchise. If given a mandate by the people at the coming election, he would, he said, endeavor to see that women were given the vote. But, he said, this was an exceptional time. If the women of this country were entitled to the franchise, they were also entitled to determining their own citizenship. In the case of aliens, that was now determined by marriage. It would be necessary to amend the naturalization law which would involve negotiations with other parts of the Empire before alien women would have the right to determine their own citizenship. It was impossible to do this before October 7, the date on which the present Parliament expired.

The Premier concluded by saying that when women realized the situation they would give the Government credit for doing the best possible under the circumstances. The women who had made the greatest sacrifice were the ones to be enfranchised.

Follow Provincial Lists.

Dr. Neely of Humboldt said that the Government was adopting a policy of discrimination. However, the Government, while discriminating along certain lines for, as stated, the benefit and safety of the State, wished to depart as little as possible from the Provincial standard of qualifications for voters. He, therefore, suggested that in the Provinces where women were permitted to vote in the Provincial elections they should be allowed to vote in this election. He would, he said, move an amendment to this effect. There was an insinuation, he said, in the attitude of the Secretary of State that the women who had used their influence in support of the soldiers were those who had relatives at the front. This was, he thought, an unworthy insinuation.

Disclaims Insinuation.

Hon. A. Meighen disclaimed any feeling of mistrust for the women of Canada who had not relatives at the front. It wasn't a question of trusting the women, he said; the Government merely thought that the sentiment of the soldiers overseas would be best reflected by their immediate relatives. As to the adoption of the Provincial franchise in this election, such action, he said, would permit women in the four Western Provinces, who had come from alien countries to vote. If they were married to Canadian citizens, all that was necessary was that they should have resided in Canada for one year.

Dr. Neely—I would be perfectly willing to trust the Swedish woman for instance, who had been married to a Canadian citizen for a year, with the vote.

Indian's Wife Not a Voter.

E. B. Devlin asked if a squaw, the wife of an Indian in the army, would be entitled to the vote. "Not under the bill as it stands," Mr. Meighen replied.

Different Views of Laws.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier argued that under the terms of the Dominion elections act, a woman would be entitled to vote in the Provinces where she had been granted the right by the local Legislature. The Minister of Justice and the law officers of the Crown might hold a different view, but the law was capable of more than one interpretation. The Solicitor-General had said that the basis of the bill was service and sacrifice, but there were different degrees of service and sacrifice.

Is a Canadian Woman a "Person"?

Mr. Meighen—The law courts have held that the term "person" cannot be held to include women.

Dr. Pugsley—Has the question ever come before the courts of Canada?

Mr. Meighen—No, but it has come before the English courts under precisely similar circumstances.

"That is a very different thing," Dr. Pugsley commented.

Would Remove Compensating Idea.

Mr. Meighen emphasized that to give the vote to all women would remove the compensating feature. It would be doing nothing for the soldier. There had been the mention of women knitting socks. But how could these be taken into consideration? Would it be one sock or two hundred socks? There had to be a difference between those who had made the highest sacrifice and those who had made only minor sacrifices.

Here Mr. Meighen referred again to the decision in England as to the meaning of the term "person." The decision was given in 1909, he informed Dr. Pugsley.

"Then it was given by an anti-Indian Judge," Dr. Pugsley retorted.

Two Amendments Fail to Carry.

Dr. Neely's amendment was declared lost on division.
Mr. G. E. McCraney moved an

amendment limiting the vote by soldiers' female relatives to those born within the British Dominions. This amendment also failed to carry.

Distinction Favors Naval Cadets.

Mr. F. B. Carvell asked why the vote was given to the female relatives of the soldiers only who had gone overseas, while it was given to the female relatives of the men who had served "within or without Canada in any of the naval forces." This, Mr. Carvell claimed, would give the vote to the relatives of a naval cadet who had never been out of Canada.

Mr. Meighen admitted that the clause might be capable of stricter limitations. He promised consideration.

Longer Time Needed.

After the recess, George E. McCraney of Saskatoon urged that the posting of the lists made by the enumerator should be done as long as possible before polling so that the Opposition could have an opportunity of perusing them. The lists should be up the day before nomination day, he said.

Mr. Meighen declared that it would never do to go that far. The ten days allowed by the bill might, however, be extended to twelve. The writs would be issued five or six weeks before election day. Mr. McCraney contended that the law as it stands provides for posting of lists one day before nomination day; that should be done under this bill.

Would be Party Organizers.

J. J. Hughes of King's, P.E.I., declared that they had no lists in Prince Edward Island. People just voted by ballot, and as everybody knew everybody else there never was any trouble. It would save the cost of enumerators if things were left as they are in the Province. He had spoken to Conservative members of that Province about it, and they had practically admitted to him that enumerators would be organizers for the party.

"I can't agree with them in that," said Mr. Meighen with a smile.

Sir Robert Borden asked if it was not a fact that in that Province each candidate looked after his own lists. Mr. Hughes admitted that it was.

Mr. Meighen stated that if lists were not used nobody would know what women would vote until election day.

Let Liberals Appoint Half.

Mr. Hughes declared that if it was the desire of the Government to run a fair election it might permit the Liberals to appoint half of the enumerators. Mr. Meighen replied that if Mr. Hughes would ask the Western members he would find that in Saskatchewan and Alberta the enumerators were not used as organizers.

"Then why don't you let the Liberals have half?" asked Mr. Hughes. "No party has any of them," said Mr. Meighen; "they are appointed by the Returning Officer."

"Who appoints the Returning Officer?" said Mr. Hughes. "It is the Government, of course."

How About Kin of Allied Reservists?

Hon. Jacques Bureau of Three Rivers asked if it was the intention of the Government to extend the franchise to females next of kin of British subjects in Canada who were reservists in the allied armies. Mr. Meighen replied that he had thought of that, but had concluded that it would be very unfair. It would be too difficult to ascertain whether the allegations of those who desired the vote were correct or not. It would, for instance, be hard to establish the existence of any man in the Russian, French or Roumanian army.

Mr. Bureau said that it would not be so difficult. Information could be secured through the Consuls. In any case the burden would be upon the voter to prove her case. If some were left out it would be better than leaving all out.

Judges Appoint Enumerators.

Edmond Proulx of Prescott thought that the enumerators should be appointed by Judges.

As to Stranded Officers.

Mr. McCrae (Sherbrooke) said there were from 12,000 to 15,000 officers overseas who had not been able to secure appointments and had taken no part in the war. Were their female relatives to get the vote? he asked.

Mr. Meighen replied that Mr. McCrae had very much overstated the number of unemployed officers. He had multiplied the number by ten. Mr. Meighen thought it would be impossible to discriminate between members of the C.E.F. who had gone overseas. They might be sent to France any day.

"And they may go no day at all," Mr. Knowles commented. He argued that the woman whose husband had got as far as Halifax had made as big a sacrifice as the man who was merely twirling a cane along the Strand.

System of Enumerators.

A discussion followed on the system of enumerators proposed in the bill. Mr. Oliver contended that the Government was proposing a method which had been abandoned in Alberta. Hon. Mr. Graham remarked that the additions to the voters' lists would be posted only ten days before election day; that would not give a candidate time to get into touch with them. In the event of a winter election, and the constituencies were scattered, Mr. Meighen remarked that all an enumerator could do would be to add to the list the names of any qualified female relative of a soldier, or take from it any disfranchised person.

Practically a Dictator.

Mr. Carvell—Suppose three hundred names were struck off by an enumerator, and the election were a close one. If you had to deal with some of the people we have in the Maritime Provinces it could easily be done. These three hundred votes would not be counted, but would be placed in an envelope to be passed on later. Think of the burden on the candidate to prove that they are qualified voters. It makes the enumerator practically a dictator. I view the provision with the greatest possible alarm.

"You are trying to cast ridicule on those who have knitted socks," reproved Dr. Pugsley.

"No, no," Mr. Meighen protested, vigorously shaking his head.

Canadian Law Recognizes Women.

Dr. Pugsley proceeded that the Solicitor-General was apparently unwilling to take chances on the advice of the Minister of Justice that the term "person" meant males only. He had prefixed the term "male," and thereby limited the franchise. In Dr. Pugsley's opinion, if a woman was a person in the eyes of the law she would have been entitled to the Dominion vote in the Provinces where the Legislature had given her the Provincial franchise. The ruling of the English courts which the Solicitor-General had recited was given at a time when a woman in England was looked upon as a chattel, and her property, on marriage, went to her husband. It was like the Blackstone dictum that a husband was permitted to beat his wife to only a moderate degree. The status of women had gradually been enlarged. The law of Canada recognized a woman as a person having civil rights.

Mr. Knowles (Moose Jaw) said that the fact of the Government giving the vote to certain women was an ad-

mission that all women were entitled to it. Mr. Knowles characterized Mr. Meighen's defence of it as "flimsy and sophistical." The bill was class legislation and another form of privilege. The principle was wrong. Mr. Knowles could not believe that the female relatives of soldiers wanted to play dog-in-the-manger and want something for themselves alone to which all women were entitled.

To Form Military Voting Class.

"It is the deliberate intention of the Government," declared Hon. Frank Oliver, "to establish in this Dominion a military voting class for the purpose of perpetuating themselves in power. They are acting without the authority of the people, and by a Parliament that is little more than a half-representative. Such an exercise of autocracy Canada never saw before, and we must take it for granted that the continuance of the Government in power will give to Canada such further examples of autocracy as the Kaiser will be glad to hear of."