

*Amalgamation of the Wesleyan Church of Canada***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS—PRIVATE BILLS**

[English]

**THE WESLEYAN CHURCH OF CANADA**

## MEASURE TO ESTABLISH

**Mr. Jack Ellis (Prince Edward-Hastings)** moved that Bill S-15, an Act to provide for the creation by amalgamation of the Wesleyan Church of Canada, be read the second time and, by unanimous consent, be referred to a Committee of the Whole.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am particularly pleased and indeed proud to be the sponsor in the House of Commons of Senate Bill S-15, which is an Act to provide for the creation by amalgamation of the Wesleyan Church in Canada. The purpose of the Bill is to provide a legislative framework under which two churches, the Pilgrims Holiness Church of Canada and the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America in Canada, may amalgamate their corporate structures. I should make the point in passing that ecclesiastically, these churches have been joined for some time. What I as sponsor and the principals of the two churches are requesting of the Commons today is the legislative completion of their bonding.

I want to put on record a brief explanation of the two churches which are requesting this legislation. It is interesting to realize how the teachings of two English church priests, John and Charles Wesley, have spread. Last weekend in Belleville I took part in the one hundredth anniversary of the United Church of Canada which also amalgamated portions of, or branches of, the church which they helped to form.

The Wesleyan revival that swept England under the leadership of John and Charles Wesley in the years following their conversion to Christ in 1738 were extremely interesting. Both Wesleys were ordained priests of the Church of England. It was not their intent to originate another denomination. However, the major portion of those touched by their teaching were from the lower working class without any formal religion and mostly illiterate. Largely rejected by the Church of England, the Wesleys and their followers formed Methodist societies, a name derived from their methodical approach to the instruction of their converts. The Methodist societies maintained some connection with the Church of England until the death of John Wesley in 1791, after which they organized under the name of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

At that time England was experiencing the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Some historians have gone so far as to credit the moral, political and social reforms that arose from the Wesleyan revival with saving England from the blood-bath that was the French Revolution. Even then, when they sent out missionaries from England initially to the American colonies, they represented the lower-class people.

● (1650)

In 1839, a large anti-slavery group within the Church made representations against slavery at the general conference and

was expelled from the conference by the bishops. This group formed the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America in 1843. They then stepped further away from the episcopal government of the Church to adopt a more congregational government.

The men and women who originally formed the Methodist Church of Canada, which ultimately became the founding of the United Church of Canada, came with the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists. In addition, English missionaries arrived representing the Wesleyan Methodist Church of England. The congregation that is involved in this private legislation today, was the third wave of Methodism to arrive in Canada, the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America in Canada. Its missionaries arrived to carry out their evangelical duties in the Ottawa Valley in the 1890s, and the resulting Church was incorporated 50 years later by a private Act of the Parliament of Canada.

The Pilgrims Holiness Church of Canada is an heir to the Holiness Movements associated with early Methodism in the Wesleyan Church of America and its growth in the pioneer camps. Out of the Holiness Movements arose many independent churches and groups. The growth of their number increased inversely with the decline in emphasis on holiness in the Mother Church. Later, many of these independent churches and groups, all Methodist in doctrine and tradition, were to convene and merge for their mutual supporting growth. One denomination that emerged was the International Holiness church based in Agua, California, a Church whose doctrine continued to emphasize the evangelical and holiness aspects of historic Methodism. In Canada, the International Holiness Church fathered congregations principally in western Ontario. These were incorporated by letters patent under the Companies Act of Canada in 1920. The International Holiness Church in the United States has since become the Pilgrims Holiness Church. The Canadian Church became, in 1928, the Pilgrims Holiness Church of Canada.

In 1968, the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Pilgrims Holiness Church voted to merge both in the United States and in Canada into one Wesleyan Church. The ecclesiastical merger was consummated immediately, but for various reasons the legal perfection of the merger in Canada has had to wait until this year, and indeed until this day. The Bill, which I am pleased to sponsor today, is the legislative measure necessary in order to allow the merger to take place in law.

I am all the more pleased at being asked to sponsor this piece of legislation as the Reverend Walter Jewel, President of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America in Canada, the Pilgrims Holiness Church of Canada, and District Superintendent of the Wesleyan Church of Canada, has been a personal friend of mine for many years. I knew Walter Jewel many years before he became the Reverend Walter Jewel, and I have cherished him as a friend ever since. I am pleased to tell the House that his dedication to his tasks and in the service of his constituents is far greater, in my opinion, than that of any Members in this House, including myself.