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ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 1912.

FROM BEHIND THE SPEAKER'S CHAIR.

The Great Question Settled.

Amendment moved by Mr. Mondou (Yamaska): "Nothing in or by this law shall be prejudicially affected any right or privilege with respect to denominational or separate schools, which any class or persons have, at the date of the passing of this Act, by law or practice, in the territory added to the Province under the provisions of this Act."

Yeas, 24; nays, 160. Thus finally and definitely has the House of Commons placed itself on record. As far as the Dominion Parliament and Federal politics are concerned the question of Separate Schools, which has agitated the country since Confederation, has ceased to exist. By a majority which is sufficiently decisive to express the views of both political parties the House has decided that it has no constitutional prerogative to deal with this question. The rights of minorities in matters of education are within the exclusive jurisdiction of a Provincial Legislature.

The outcome of the debates on the Manitoba Boundaries Bill has been a complete vindication of the attitude taken by the Borden Government. It was very clearly stated by the Prime Minister on the second reading of the Bill that both for political and constitutional reasons Parliament could not impose separate schools on the territory of Keewatin to be added to Manitoba. The Opposition, with Sir Wilfrid Laurier in the lead, came down with somewhat precipitated haste from "within the lines of Torres Vedras" when they could no longer escape the vote on the third reading and ranged themselves behind the Government. "I knew," remarked Mr. Monk in the course of his speech, "when my right hon. friend stated the other day, with studied caution, that he had retired 'within the lines of Torres Vedras,' that he would be 'chased out of those lines. I must confess that I was 'somewhat curious to see how he would manoeuvre. I did not for a single moment doubt that he would not follow the example of the noble duke whose name is 'associated with Torres Vedras, but that his issuing from those lines would be coupled with a great deal of gliding and sliding.'"

This reference which Sir Wilfrid made to his attitude on the school question will become historic. It was effectively handled by more than one speaker during the debate. The remarks of Mr. Louis Coderre, member for Hochelaga, one of the divisions of Montreal, are worth quoting: "The spectacle we have before us," he said, "does not justify at all the right hon. gentleman in comparing his own attitude and the attitude of his party, on this very important question with the attitude of Wellington and his soldiers at Torres Vedras in 1810. That great political party has no policy to offer the House; if these politicians, Sir, have such a policy, they have not the courage to stand openly by it. We see no flag, Sir, flying on top of their lines of battle. I know they have two, though; but their political cunning advises them that those flags should remain in the dark till the day of the election comes. And then, Sir, those who do not know the hon. gentleman will be surprised to find one of those two flags in the Province of Quebec, bearing the motto, 'Separate schools for Keewatin,' and the other one flying in the other Provinces within its folds the slogan, 'Hands off Manitoba.' Sir, if there were lions within the lines of Torres Vedras, there are political foxes on the Opposition seats. These tactics succeeded once in 1896; but I believe that this country will not consent to be deceived any more."

The constituency of Hochelaga contains a greater French-Canadian population than any other division in Montreal. Mr. Coderre's open and emphatic support of the Government will not be without its lesson to Mr. Bourassa and his band of Quebec agitators. Mr. Rainville of Chambly and Vercheres also gave the Opposition a particularly warm time. He chaffed Sir Wilfrid with having submitted an ambiguous amendment on the second reading in which certain indefinite "rights" were supposed to be interfered with. "Why, Mr. Speaker," he said, "there are hon. gentlemen on the other side who are preparing to go to the Province of Quebec and say that if they vote against this amendment of my hon. friend from Yamaska, it is because the amendment is already covered by the amendment of the right hon. leader of the Opposition. That, Sir, is an actual fact, a statement to that effect has been made to me in the corridors of this House. These confidences were keenly enjoyed. They clearly indicated that there was trouble in the Liberal camp."

When the House divided on Mr. Mondou's amendment seventeen members on the Opposition side and seven French-Canadians on the Government side supported it. There were numerous absentees from the Liberal ranks, particularly from constituencies in Ontario. A clear majority of 136 for the Government is sufficient evidence that while the Liberals had they dared would have attempted to embarrass the Government, they realized that it would have amounted to political suicide. The contention of the Government that the question is entirely within the jurisdiction of the Province of Manitoba and that the Province will deal fairly and justly with the minority will meet with general approval throughout the country.

In the Small Hours.

Sittings of the House which continue until past four o'clock in the morning are unusual. The circumstances on Tuesday night of this week were also unusual. The Government had put its foot down, in a way Governments have, and intimidated courteously but firmly that the Opposition could talk if they pleased until the sun rose, but the Manitoba Boundaries Bill, which was up for third reading, was going through. It went through. At 4:03 a. m. precisely, the Speaker declared the Bill passed after one of the most momentous debates Parliament has seen in many years.

Momentous for several reasons: the strength of the Government was being put to the test; the principle laid down that the question of Separate Schools in the territory of Keewatin was solely within the jurisdiction of the Manitoba Legislature was at stake; an insidious amendment suggesting "vested rights" had been put forward by the Opposition to catch the unwary and, if possible, justify their own vacillating policy. Canadian history was being made in the small hours of Wednesday morning and there was not a member of the House that did not realize it.

Mr. Mondou's amendment that a clause should be

added to the Bill providing that any rights in the territory with respect to Separate Schools should not be prejudicially affected by the provisions of the Act, had been defeated earlier in the evening by a majority of 136. The Opposition had felt it advisable to come down off the fence and vote with the Government; there were a number of absentees, however, who found the situation too embarrassing.

When this amendment was disposed of Hon. S. H. Beland, Liberal member for Beauce, was put up to save the face of the Opposition and supply an amendment for which the Liberal party could vote with easy conscience. He moved that the Bill be sent back to committee to have inserted an amendment providing that a conference of representatives of the Dominion and Manitoba Governments should be held to determine what vested rights exist in the district to be added and to decide what steps should be taken to protect these rights.

Then followed floods of oratory, mostly in French. Mr. Beland spoke at great length and was followed on the same side by Messrs. Ethier, Lapointe, Boivin, Proulx and Demers. Hon. Robert Rogers, Hon. Mr. Nantel, Mr. Maclean of York, Mr. Seigny and Mr. Paquet supported the Government. The position taken on the Government side was that the "vested rights" existed in the territory and that Manitoba as a sovereign Province was entitled to manage her own affairs.

The hours dragged on. At 3 a. m. the public galleries, which had been crowded until long after midnight still held a number of interested spectators. The House also thinned. Speeches in French are not an inspiration to the English speaking members, especially at 3 o'clock in the morning. A stalwart few, enough to make a quorum, remained and dozed with their feet on seats or their heads buried in their arms, seeking solace in realms where divisions are unknown.

Sir Wilfrid, lying back in his chair, gazed fitfully at the glass ceiling and blinked, now and then giving his devoted follower who was vigorously addressing "Monsieur l'Orateur" encouraging applause. One Cabinet Minister, who shall be for ever nameless, slept the sleep of the just. Others yawned. Yawning is catching. The small pages obviously enjoyed being up half the night and were the only individuals wide awake. Nobody wrote anything in the Press Gallery, there were no papers awaiting news at that hour. The only interruption came from some dreamer who would faintly murmur "question" now and then and turn again to uneasy sleep.

"It cannot be denied," shouted the hon. member in possession of the floor. Not a soul showed the slightest desire to contradict him.

"Now is the time," he repeated with much insistence, and there was a concerted glance at the clock by wakeful members and an audible echo, "Hear, hear."

Then, suddenly, at 3:47 a. m., the flood of oratory dried up. After a minute's silence the Speaker put the question on the amendment. The House was awake in an instant. "I think the 'nays' have it," came the opinion from the chair. The Opposition "yeas" promptly demanded a vote.

"Call in the members," said Mr. Speaker, and the division bells started ringing. Members poured in from every doorway.

As the seats filled wideawake supporters of the Government started "We won't go home till morning," and sang it lustily. "My Old Kentucky Home," was the choice of the Opposition. Not to be outdone the Conservatives in "the colony" to the left of the Chair chimed in with "Swanee River." A ball of paper flew across the desks and landed on the bald head of an hon. gentleman who still slept. "Order," said the victim as he awoke with a start.

Then the House settled down to business. The Speaker read the amendment. Sir Wilfrid stood to record the first vote for the "yeas" amid the cheers of his supporters.

When it came to the "nays," and Mr. Borden rose quietly to oppose the amendment, pandemonium again broke loose on the Government side. Yells and cheers enough to raise the roof greeted the Leader of the Government. Mr. Monk, Mr. Pelletier and Mr. Nantel, the French-Canadian members of the Cabinet, were duly honored as they recorded their votes. Every French-Canadian supporter as he rose in his place received his meed of applause. The hands of the clock pointed to five as Mr. Robideaux of Kent County, N. B., in the far corner of "the colony" gave the last vote for the Government—the last in the division.

A brief interval while the Clerk of the House made the count. As he rose and bowed low to the Speaker the dropping of a pin could have been heard: "Yeas, 62; nays, 107."

A sweeping and record victory for the Government. A majority of 55. The cheering on the Conservative side broke out afresh and was renewed again and again. The Speaker put the original motion that the Bill be now read a third time.

The Opposition had shot their bolt. A faint murmur of "nay" was the only response to the victorious "yeas" for the Government.

"I declare the Bill now passed and that the title be as on the order paper," said the Speaker. Mr. Borden moved the adjournment of the House. The time was 4:05 a. m.

Thus ended a debate which was watched with keen and critical interest throughout the country. Reference has been made to the occasion being momentous. It was all that. For fifteen years Sir Wilfrid Laurier shunned adding the territory of Keewatin to Manitoba because he knew that a demand for a charter of Separate Schools would be made upon him when the expansion came. He shifted, delayed, picked quarrels with the Government of Manitoba; he did everything but face the difficulty.

Mr. Borden took up the negotiations on assuming office. He carried them to a successful conclusion. He was impervious to the threats which came from the champions of Separate Schools. He faced the possibility of a mutiny on the part of the more extreme members of the French-speaking section of his party. He carried the Bill exactly as the Government intended it should be carried without any clause relating to Separate Schools. He carried it on the third reading without the loss of a single supporter. An analysis of the vote shows that there was not a member on the Government side of the House who was not accounted for. On the Opposition side there were twelve unaccounted for and missing.

The result means much to the country. A Conservative member remarked to The Standard's correspondent after the adjournment: "This night's work adds ten years to the life of the Government." A fresh page in Canada's political history was turned—in the small hours.

Current Comment

(Bobcaygeon Independent.)

The strike of coal miners in England for a minimum wage still looks bad, and all trade is becoming tied up. There is one way of settling the trouble, prompt, permanent, and effective, confiscate the mines to the state.

(Vancouver Province.)

The Canadian commercial traveller who sold sticky paper in Siberia would complete his title to the Carnegie medal for heroism by selling coonskin overcoats to the Zulus.

(Ottawa Citizen.)

We still have in Captain Bernier the only great British explorer in captivity.



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GREAT SCIENTIST AWARDED COVETED HONOR BY THE KING

London, March 15.—King George has conferred the coveted order of merit which is granted only to the most eminent persons in any walk of life, on Sir Joseph Thomson, the great scientist.

HURRICANE SWEEPS TOWN—FIVE PEOPLE KILLED OUTRIGHT

Troy, Ala., Mar. 15.—A hurricane struck Headland, Ala., several miles below Troy, at 3 o'clock this morning. Five persons were killed outright, two others were perhaps fatally injured and four or five others hurt.

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COUNTY COUNCIL WILL PROTEST TOO

Councillors Maintain Parishes Will Not Get Fair Deal Under Terms of New City Charter.

In addition to the delegation from the Fairville Board of Trade there will be a committee representing the members of the county council for the parishes on hand at Fredericton when the commission charter for the city comes up for consideration.

One of the parish councillors stated yesterday that while nobody denied the right of the city to adopt a new form of government, it was felt that the provisions of the proposed charter defining the relation of the commission to the county were not calculated to give the parishes a fair deal. The people of the parishes do not approve of the idea of giving the mayor and four commissioners three votes a piece in the county council, as it is felt 15 men are more likely to give a fairer show to the parishes than 5 men with 3 votes each.

It is understood that if this feature of the charter is adopted the parish representatives will ask that the voting powers of the commission be limited to questions of administration of such functions as both the city and parishes are taxed to carry on the management of the jail, almshouse, hospital etc. At the present time the county council has control of a number of parish functions such as the performance of which the parishes levy special taxes.

It is claimed by some that the city is entitled to an even larger representation in the county council than it now enjoys, as it is said that the city pays about 88 per cent. of the county taxes. But the parish councillors say this view is not correct, as the city only pays 88 per cent. of the taxes levied for the maintenance of the jail, hospital and almshouse, all of which are patronized to a much greater extent by the city people than by the people of the parishes. It is pointed out that the parishes have to levy additional taxes for local purposes, and that therefore it is unfair to say that the city pays 88 per cent. of the county taxes.

Regina, Mar. 15.—Six men were injured, one of them fatally, as a result of an accident on the new Leader building here this afternoon. The men were going to work on the sixth story of the building and were being taken up by a steam hoist. The cable of the hoist broke and all were precipitated to the ground.

The injured are, Wm. Morley, Jos. Sandbrook, Fred Thornton, Wm. Shawcross, Wm. Arkwall, all bricklayers, and a Syrian, name unknown. One of the men may die.

TWO ARE KILLED IN THE WESTPHALIAN STRIKE DISORDERS

Ottawa, March 15.—While final plans regarding the program of the Borden ministry after parliament prorogues, have not been completed, it is known that the Hon. Messrs. Rogers and Hazen will visit England, the former in connection with the immigration affairs, and Mr. Hazen to take up naval affairs with the British admiralty. The Premier may also visit the old country.

MASSACHUSETTS WANTS CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY

Boston, Mass., Mar. 15.—An order inviting the Canadian Pacific Railroad to extend its lines to Boston, was reported in the house of representatives today by the committee on railroads. The vote in the committee on the order was unanimous. The same committee has before it the petition of the Southern New England Railroad for permission to enter Boston as another New England outlet for the Grand Trunk Railroad.

REAL MEANING OF FLAG AT HALF MAST

New York, March 15.—Perhaps you have noticed that whenever a prominent person dies, especially if he is connected with the government, the flags on public buildings are hoisted only part of the way up. This is called half mast. Did you ever stop to think what connection there could be between a flag that was not properly hoisted and the death of a great man?

Ever since the flags were used in war it has been the custom to have the flag of the superior or conquering nation above that of the inferior or vanquished. When an army found itself hopelessly beaten it hauled its flag down far enough for the flag of the victors to be placed above it on the same pole. This was a token not only of submission, but of respect.

In these days when a famous soldier died flags were lowered out of respect to his memory. The custom long ago passed from purely military usage to public life of all kinds, the flag flying at half mast being a sign that the dead man was worthy of universal respect. The space left above it is for the flag of the great conqueror of all, the Angel of Death.

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