

Legislative Council.

Passage at Arms between the President and Hon. Mr. Gibbs. Hon. Mr. Squires reads the Most Celebrated Circular Special. Extension Bill Amended.

The Council met at 2.45 yesterday to further discuss the Extension Bill, and was in session until 7 o'clock.

Hon. Mr. Gibbs continued his remarks on the Amendment proposed by Hon. Mr. Milley, which lasted for more than an hour. He came back to his criticism of the arguments put forward by the Hon. President, why the Extension Bill should pass. The President had referred to the matter of extension of the Ontario Parliament. This Mr. G. said, was brought forward by the leader of the Opposition, and was not a subject for discussion in the local situation. In this country there was a decided opposition to the very essence of the Constitution, and the branches of the Legislature and the Government were not within the spirit of the Constitution. The Constitution itself was an election where the people were allowed to choose their representatives. Hon. Mr. Anderson had provided that 125,000 of the people were unrepresented when the vote was taken by the Legislature, and that this number should be disfranchised by the Constitution. The question of who is to be enfranchised, he said, is not with the Government of the day, but in the hands of the Supreme Court and its judges and a Military Board. The President had been advanced by the President that we should not have an election while the war was on. In 1917 when Sir Edward Morris failed to get his party to unite with Coaker's representatives were made for an election in the Fall. The literature was prepared, and the men were selected to vote. Then to hear Hon. gentlemen in this House, who were acquainted with these facts, get up and tell the people that because of the war no election should be held, is more than ridiculous. The Hon. the President knew there was to be an election in 1917, because Sir Edward Morris had mentioned him in the matter in his own words.

Hon. the President—I categorically deny this. You have no proofs.

Hon. Mr. Gibbs—I am going to give you some proofs.

Hon. the President—You have no proofs. Mr. Chairman, I rise to a point of order and want a ruling.

Hon. Mr. Gibbs—You said yesterday that men in this House did not come here with clean hands, and I want to prove here that you did not come here with clean hands.

Hon. the President—I deny the accusation, and you are bound to accept my statement. I appeal to Hon. Mr. Squires. He knows that when a member makes a statement and has no proof, and a denial is made, the member is bound to withdraw.

Hon. Mr. Gibbs—The editors of the other Government papers were consulted, and it is quite reasonable that you were.

Hon. the President—I am not concerned with what others did. You have no proofs.

Hon. Mr. Gibbs—I am prepared to leave it to the judgment of this House and the people outside the House.

Hon. the President—Do you withdraw the statement?

Hon. Mr. Gibbs—No, I do not.

Hon. the President—You must accept my statement.

Hon. Mr. Gibbs—I cannot. My conscience won't allow me. Yesterday you came to this House and in a most partisan manner discussed the Bill before the chair, which you should not have done. Any man who respected the dignity of his position and the rights of this House would not have done so. You occupy a semi-judicial position to settle matters of dispute that might arise, and you were not acting properly.

Hon. the President—I spoke to all the bills that came before the House.

Hon. Mr. Gibbs—Yes, but not in the partisan manner you did yesterday.

Hon. the President—When the late Judge Emerson was speaker he did the same.

Hon. Mr. Gibbs—He never did, nor

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did the late Speaker Kent, nor any of the others.

Hon. the President—The member is not playing the man.

Hon. Mr. Gibbs—I have played the man, but if I played the same part as you have, I would not call myself a man.

The question of the War or the Regiment was not a consideration as regards an election in 1917. If the great betrayal, which was nothing but the act of a political adventurer, had not been brought about, there would have been an election. It was not a matter of the Regiment or the Empire that prompted the Extension Bill. This was condemned in the speeches and writings of Messrs. Coaker, Lloyd, et al. last year in the Assembly. They were not then thinking about the war, but were asking what had we to do with the war, and telling the public it would go on if we were never here.

The attacks on Premier Morris by the then Opposition and its press were of the most vitriolic nature, and he would like to know how the lion and the lamb stabled together. It was a case where Premier Morris betrayed his followers, which events have fully proved.

One part of the bargain was an extension, and the other for him to resign, and in the face of these happenings the House was asked to seriously consider the bill. He would like to know what brought Morris and Coaker together. If there were any dealings on public matters, the House had a right to know. If it is an honest transaction, why be ashamed? If Mr. Coaker did camp on Morris's door step, what was he there for? If we are going to have Confederation, let us go into it knowingly, and not be sold into it. As to the President's position on Thursday, he said it was deplorable to see a gentleman who occupies such a high position, where he has got to decide on questions and sit in a semi-judicial Chamber, act the partizan as he did the previous day. It did not do credit to the dignity of the position. Other matters in connection with the President's speech were referred to, and speeches of Hon. Lloyd, Coaker and Halfyard, and writings from the Advocate were read, which will appear in the official debates.

Hon. Mr. Mews, in reply to Mr. Gibbs' remarks of the previous day, said the hon. member did not read the two opening paragraphs of the Reid letter, which showed that Sir William Reid was only writing to Lord Shaughnessy as a matter of replying to criticisms, and hoping to keep himself retained as President of the R. N. Co. The letter for that matter might have been a plot to injure Mr. Coaker, and when it first appeared last year, Mr. Coaker took legal action against the writer. In the Magistrate's Court the words were not held as libellous, but the Court did not say if they were true or untrue. A further action was taken in the Supreme Court, but the jury dismissed the case without calling a single witness. The letter was written the day before the general meeting of the Company, when Sir W. D. Reid lost the position of President of the Company, and therefore could not reach Lord Shaughnessy to be effective. From this it might be taken that it was written for the purpose which he set out. Besides the action against Sir W. D. Reid, other libel actions were taken by Mr. Coaker to vindicate himself. Here Hon. Mr. Mews read the affidavit of Hon. Mr. Coaker. He also read a letter of Dr. Lloyd to prove that Confederation had not been discussed, and that Mr. Coaker was not a Confederate. He thought the House could easily decide if the letter was of any value.

Hon. Mr. Squires said he was pleased to listen to the scholarly and well-considered address of the Hon. President on Thursday, on the Amendment to the Extension Bill, proposed by Hon. Mr. Milley. He had followed the arguments of Hon. Mr. Harvey and Anderson, who spoke favor-

ably to the Bill, but nothing had been advanced by either to show any reason why the bill should pass. The arguments of Hon. Mr. Harvey and Anderson that it was necessary to put the Bill through to carry the Military Service Act into effect, did not appeal to him. When he spoke last he said if he thought it was necessary, he would give the Bill his heartiest support. The Conscription Bill had been passed unanimously. The proclamation would issue May 25th, its operation would be in the hands of a Military Board, appointed by the Government, who were non-partisan, non-political, and men of good standing, and in view of the fact that the Supreme Court would be the Court of Appeal, he could not see in any possible manner how an election would affect its operation. While in the House discussing the matter the Premier stated that only Class 1 would be called up this year, and that 300 were only required right away. Thanks to the splendid efforts of the volunteers, and some fear of the Act, this number had been more than reached already, and if Class 1 was called there would be sufficient men to fill the gaps of the Regiment for one year. With these facts in view, every argument that has been set up falls flatly to the ground. Hon. Mr. Bishop pointed out that the Premier only asked for 300 immediately and 60 a month thereafter, and that it would only be necessary to call up Class 1. Hon. the President took the position that this was not the Prime Minister's intention. It was not for him to say what the Prime Minister meant, but his words were quite clear, and that only Class 1 would be called. The position put forth by the President that Class 2 might need to be called up in the Fall, was not in keeping with facts. The position taken by Hon. Mr. Bishop and outlined by the Premier, I will presently prove, was the intention of the Government. It will be remembered that the Legislature opened on April 23rd, and on the 24th the Military Service Bill was brought before the House. On the 25th it passed unanimously. Now, Sir, on the 26th of April, a circular, written by W. F. Coaker, President of the Fishermen's Union, was distributed outside St. John's, which I would like to read.

Hon. Mr. Mews, who said he had no knowledge of any circular, appealed to the Chair, asking that Hon. Mr. Squires be not allowed to read it. It might be a secret circular, or it might not have been issued at all. If it was not the original, the member was in honor bound not to read it. It would not be taken as evidence in a court of justice, and Mr. Coaker may be able to disprove it.

Hon. Mr. Squires—He will have every opportunity to disprove it. The hon. member then read sections of "Special Circular," which appeared in yesterday's Telegram. The House and the large assembly listened in deep silence, and were almost dumbfounded when Mr. Squires had finished. Mr. Squires continued: From this I gather that when Dr. Lloyd informed the Joint Committee that only 300 men were required and 2 a day, he was telling the truth, and that is the view that has been taken by Hon. Mr. Bishop and myself. That is the real view. I submit that not more than Class 1 is to be called up, which will be sufficient for the year. If not sufficient for all time, according to the views expressed by Mr. Coaker, until a pronouncement could be had from the Government in the matter. An election in April or May would not interfere with the conscription measure. Surely there can be no doubt left in the minds of the members as to the Government's true intention not to call up more than Class 1. Any doubt that might have existed should surely be dispelled by the statement of Mr. Coaker's letter. But still if one lot of doubt remained, it should not be an influence in extending the life of the present Parliament beyond April 30, 1918. It was put forward by Hon. Mr. Harvey in his usual choice diction that the Extension Bill meant the postponement of an election indefinitely, and by the President until after the war. The holding of an election in April or May next would not preclude the Government from carrying out the Conscription Bill and conducting public affairs. The Legislature could meet in January or February, which is the proper time, particularly for our members, and conduct business. If at that time the Government can justify itself that a prolongation is necessary, I am sure those members who supported the Bill will do the same. The idea of extending indefinitely in 1919 is an absurdity. They are asking for a year and they are getting it. In the second reading I opposed the Bill as strongly as I could, and the President has failed to convince me that there should be an extension at all. If a crisis should arise, the amendment would not affect granting a further lease of life to the Government, but it cannot be possible that any member can in justice object to the amendment. An election in April or May would not affect economic conditions. The fishermen would be supplied as usual, the banking institutions would go on as usual, in fact there would be no interference with the country's trade. As he had mentioned during the second reading, it was a piece of impertinence to introduce the Bill to the House at all, and it was disgraceful to flaunt the flag of patriotism behind the Regiment and the war. The object of the Bill was to prolong the life of the Parliament longer than April 30th, 1918.

Hon. the President was surprised at the circular read by the Hon. member. He would like the House to rise until a pronouncement could be had from the Government in the matter. It might have been written by somebody other than Mr. Coaker, though he did not presume that it was, and an opportunity should be given to have the matter cleared up. He was no party to any such suffering. He was honestly dealing with the matter of conscription, and would like to see the Regiment in the war to the end. He in no way would attempt to mitigate the matter, and was not going to be a party to it.

Hon. Mr. Anderson supported the amendment, and believed there were no political shuttles in the Council.

Hon. Mr. Harvey also supported the amendment.

The question being put the amendment was carried unanimously.

Some other amendments were moved by Hon. Mr. Squires, which will be considered to-day.

On motion of Hon. Mr. Ellis, rule 33 was suspended, and the Council adjourned at 7 o'clock to meet at 3 this afternoon.

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