

with the Bill that I am convinced it is more partisanship than anything else that satisfies him. I desire to place on record a protest against the Franchise Bill, and I take the report in to-day's Montreal Gazette. It reads:

At a meeting of the Equal Suffrage League in the Royal Arcanum Chambers last evening, the various speakers criticised the Federal Government and Sir Robert Borden over the Franchise Bill which is at present being discussed in the House of Commons. Although the meeting was not of a political nature, the presence of a few men gave it the air, at one stage, of a partisan gathering. The business before the meeting was the report of Mrs. Rose Henderson of the reception by Sir Robert Borden of the deputation which went to Ottawa early in the week to advance their views on the new Franchise Bill. After everything had been said about the franchise question, discussion drifted until toward the close, Food Controller Hanna came in for some sharp criticism.

About thirty persons attended the meeting, most of whom were women. All, with the exception of two men, seemed to be in sympathy with the views expressed and the action which had been decided upon.

None of the ladies who spoke claimed to be close relatives to soldiers on active service and consequently enfranchised by the proposed law.

In speaking of the delegation's work at Ottawa, Mrs. Rose Henderson declared that they had gone down to meet the Prime Minister on short notice, as the Franchise Bill was being rushed through, and they wished to discuss it with the Government leader before it finally passed. She said that the deputation felt that the bill was anti-democratic, and was a direct refutation of the facts, for which men have been sent overseas. "I don't think such an autocratic measure has ever passed the Canadian House of Commons, as this one," said Mrs. Henderson. "According to the terms of the bill a large proportion of men will be disfranchised, while there is also a tremendous discrimination in the case of women. Why is it that women who have worked for the Red Cross and for the Patriotic Fund are deprived of the vote by this measure?"

Continuing, Mrs. Henderson stated that the deputation wanted to know why the Government could only trust soldiers' relatives, and not Canadian women who have been doing more than their share to help win the war. It was for these reasons that they decided to go to Ottawa and ask Sir Robert to explain.

Mrs. Henderson then gave her report of the meeting with the Prime Minister. She said that he gave them a long lecture on how and why they were to be discriminated against. Women, said the Premier, are not citizens. Until they came into full possession of citizenship, he did not see how they could have the ballot. He also declared that according to the Imperial Council meeting in 1914, certain naturalization laws had been passed, and as a result of these any woman who married a man of foreign birth or citizenship had to accept the naturalization of her husband, that is, if a Canadian-born woman married a German, she herself became German. Because of this, Sir Robert considered it an injustice to give these women the ballot. However, after this he assured the delegation that if he was returned to power at the coming elections, he would give the women a limited franchise.

[Mr. L. A. Lapointe.]

On asking the Premier what he meant by a limited franchise, they were answered that a woman to qualify for the ballot after the war would be required to reside in Canada for a period of five years, and also have educational qualifications. The latter would be most important. The delegation then asked Sir Robert if the women whom he had enfranchised by the new Bill were required to possess these qualifications, but he replied in the negative.

Mrs. Henderson then declared that the delegation, therefore, came to the conclusion that the new Franchise Bill was not a measure of right, but simply an expedient measure; not so much to win the war as to win the election. She said it was ridiculous to have women of Russian or Polish birth who could not speak a word of English, and who had only lived in Canada perhaps for a few months before the war, given the right to vote, while women who have been living here all their lives and who have been working for the good of their country were deprived of it.

Sir Robert Borden, continued Mrs. Henderson, agreed that the present Bill was an injustice to the women of Canada. He showed that even his wife, who had been doing a good deal of patriotic work, and the wife of Hon. Martin Burrell, would be unable to vote. He said that the measure would have to go through, and the only thing the women of Canada could do was to wait and hope. Sir Robert said that many soldiers have died on the battlefield and as a result their principles and ideas should be expressed through their widows or nearest relatives.

Mrs. Weir, who spoke next, said that according to the outlook it seemed as if a military caste was being formed in Canada. She told the audience that the latest rumour she had heard was to the effect that the Government had told the soldiers in France that if the present Government was returned to power, all the soldiers would be given free passage and six months' leave of absence.

Mrs. Henderson, who presided, replied that there was no doubt but that the Government is trying to get elected by every possible means. "The Government," she continued, "has set a bad precedent by depriving a number of peaceful citizens from voting at a time which they consider to be a crisis. What is to prevent a government in the future from saying that there is a tremendous crisis when they desire to pass an important measure, and take the vote away from some other people who happen to be interested in the question contrary to the Government's wishes?" said Mrs. Henderson.

Mr. A. Lanouette, the first gentleman to speak, said that the Franchise Act was certainly an injustice, and also an insult. "It is nothing else than a political action. It is power they want, and power under any circumstances." In his opinion the Equal Suffrage League ought to organize immediately, agitate, and call public meetings similar to the one in Verdun last week, to place the issue before the people. "An open air meeting looks pretty good," he said.

"We might be arrested," said Mrs. Weir.

"No danger in Verdun—all the policemen are our friends," he answered.

After this one man in the audience sharply attacked the meeting for criticizing the Government during such a crisis. He said that everybody should join together at a time like this and help win the war. The question of