

COMMITTEE WILL PROBE
REDISTRIBUTION QUESTIONSession Confined Largely to Parliamentary Skirmishing—Official
Opposition Confines Itself Largely to Criticism—Premier
King Approves of Proportional Representation.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM IS BIG PROBLEM

Special to The Advertiser
By a Staff Correspondent.

Ottawa, Feb. 26.—The session so far has been confined largely to parliamentary skirmishing between the parties in the Commons, with the honorable members of the Senate having completed the debate on the address, cynically holidaying at home, and awaiting some grist from the Commons' mill. In the Commons there has been much jockeying over policies, though a little practical work has been done, including the passing of a few million dollars' worth of agricultural estimates; the creation of several committees for the purpose of inquiring into certain subjects upon which there is not entire agreement among the members.

Controversy of an aggressive character has been fairly well lacking, the official opposition contenting itself largely with a criticism of the government for alleged lack of decision upon important policies, and the Progressives, under their new leader, Robert Forke, adopting more or less of a waiting attitude and evincing an inclination to co-operate with the government without compromise to their own code of principles.

Few Not Engaged.
When the committees, standing and special, get down to work, there will be very few members of the Commons who are not engaged on one or the other of them. In addition, the usual committees of the house, there has been appointed a committee of 19 composed of four Conservatives, five Progressives and ten Liberals, to work out the schedules of redistribution for presentation to the house. This committee has the guidance of the declaration of the House of Commons, setting forth the number of seats which each province will have under the new census.

In addition, however, the Commons has thrashed out the question of the application of the alternative vote and of proportional representation, and the result of these discussions may have some effect upon the committee's deliberations. Resolutions on both subjects were introduced by Mr. Brant. The first resolution was declared carried without division and without debate. There was, however, a lengthy discussion upon the proportional representation, which was defeated by a majority of 18.

Progressives in Favor.
As indicative or premonitory of what the special committee on redistribution may do on the subject, it is interesting to note that Progressives, with the exception of Mr. McBratney, voted solidly for proportional representation, while 21 Liberals, including Premier King, Mr. H. S. Fielding, Hon. Ernest Lapointe, Hon. W. R. Meagher, Hon. J. A. Robb, Hon. Charles Stewart, Hon. James Murdock and others voted against it.

Fifty-four Liberals voted against it, and Conservatives, with the exception of MacLean of York, Thurlston of Victoria, Halliburton and Reed of Frontenac, recorded themselves as solidly opposed to it. Only 162 out of a total house vote of 233, were recorded, there being no quorum on the question was not regarded as a party one.

The fact that Progressives and Independents, however, are unanimous for the application of the principle to federal elections creates some speculation as to whether the special committee on redistribution will be able to present to Parliament an unanimous report or not. Another question which may militate against the unanimity is the fact that of all the provinces of Confederation, Nova Scotia is the only one to lose seats. It is quite possible in the circumstances that there will be majority and minority reports, and that the whole question will have to be threshed out in the house.

Premier Approves.
Premier King approves of proportional representation as do several of his prominent ministers, but the majority of his party are against it. Official Opposition Leader Meigher opposes the principle as conducive of a multiplication of groups, of a carnival of favor-begging in Parliament, and as destructive of responsible government continuity of policy and strength and efficiency of administration.

The chief bone of contention during the session so far has been the vexed question of civil service reform. A two-day debate upon a motion of Capt. Power of West Quebec, calling for the abolition of the civil service commission and the revival of the civil service act of 1908, the government succeeded in passing the shape of a resolution by which the appointment of a special committee to hear the evidence of deputy ministers, and of the committee itself with regard to its working.

Liberals voted solidly for the committee, 38 strong, and with 16 Progressives, Brown of Lisgar, Kennedy of North York and Kenora, McBride of Yale-Carleton, McTaggart of Maple Creek, Pritchard of North Wellington, Sexsmith of Lennox and Addington, Wainwright of Strathcona, and Woods of Dufferin, together with Irvine of Calgary, Neill of Comox Island, and Woodsworth of Centre Winnipeg, Independents.

Favors Committee.
It is not to be taken for granted, however, that the support which the Liberals secured outside of their own party was in favor of a return to patronage. The bulk of the Progressives, and all of the Conservatives present voted even against the appointment of a committee on the subject. These Progressives and Independents who voted for a committee did so with a desire to secure a true knowledge of the state of affairs as represented by government members. The vote stood 90 to 72 in favor of the committee idea, or a majority of 18. With vacancies in North Essex and Moose Jaw, there are 238 seats in the house at present. Liberals, 128; Progressives, 50; Conservatives, 44. The above division, Liberals recorded 109 of their own party voted in favor of the committee, 48 Progressives, 44 Conservatives and Independents 44. This of course included pairs of whom there were 16 Liberals and 16 Conservatives. Proportional representation, however, has little to the pairing system, but have about a score of members absent.

A special committee on agricultural conditions has been appointed, but it is more than probable that it will be succeeded by a royal commission, as proposed by John Miller of Qu'Appelle. The bulk of this committee and the investigation as laid down requires travel. If all evidence necessary is to be taken at Ottawa, the expense of bringing witnesses will be great indeed. Apart from the above the session so far has been uneventful.

FAVORS DAY LABOR
ON CIVIC BUILDINGAld. Frank McKay Expresses
Opinion That Contract
Work Is Mistake.

Notwithstanding that the city council did not accept the recommendation of No. 2 committee to build the registry office by day labor, Ald. McKay is of the opinion that it is making a serious mistake. "The finest municipal building we have—the Hydro Building—was built under that system, he says, the saving being a real consideration according to members of the utilities commission, which has built a number of other buildings under the same system.

"The utilities commission employs a contractor to look after the work and supply the equipment on a percentage basis, the commission paying its own materials. The commission has found that its greatest gain is made in this way.

"Under this system—but not in the building of this particular building, as the plan have to be approved by the department in Toronto, before a change would be permitted—greater elasticity is given. Changes may be made, where a great deal might be saved by varying the plan slightly, and at the same time making a more complete and perfect building, without adding the expense of such a move under the contract system.

"One of the principal opponents to the plan was an alderman who had built a number of houses by contract but had not tried out the system. He is absolutely honest in his opinion, but in my opinion his judgment is bad in this particular instance.

"This talk of the cement mixer is a red herring, to those who are beginning to see the light—nothing anything in the construction of a building? Ask the police!"

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These men are all recognized as experts in the subjects on which they will speak, and in addition to this phase of the meeting there will be two reels of moving pictures showing in detail the course of important export orders, and bringing into play all the human elements that affect trading operations. Of their long and intimate experience in various export markets, the government officers give vivid impressions and concrete facts that are both entertaining and instructive. The subjects dealt with are of great interest to those engaged in domestic trade, as well as exporters, since all trade is more or less affected by international exchange of commodities, and by economic conditions in other countries.

This is a meeting that the London Chamber of Commerce is presenting to the businessmen of the city with special enthusiasm, at a time when the export trade of the country is of such moment, and they have made arrangements whereby any manufacturer or businessman interested in this trade question may secure an appointment with the visiting trade commissioners.

Mr. W. J. Egan is expected in the city tonight or Tuesday morning. The meeting is free, and manufacturers are urged to secure the attendance of employees, packers and shippers, and all office men handling export documents.

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