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House of Assembly Proceedings.

OFFICIAL SYNOPSIS

(Continued.)

MONDAY, MARCH 9th. The House met at 3 p.m., but long before that hour the halls and lobby were crowded with ladies, awaiting the second reading of the Franchise Bill.

MR. POWER presented a petition from the residents of Wood's Island respecting a ferry service from that place to Corner Brook.

THE HON. MINISTER OF JUSTICE introduced a Bill to amend Cap. 52 of the Consolidated Statutes, "Or Egress from Churches, Theatres and other Buildings." The Bill was read a first time.

Answers to questions on the Order Paper were then tabled.

THE SPEAKER informed the House of the receipt of a message from the Governor, relative to the appointment of the President of the Council, Hon. A. B. Morine, Hon. S. Milley, the Speaker, the Prime Minister, the Colonial Secretary and the Attorney-General, as members of the Internal Economy Commission.

The House then went into Committee to consider the War Pensions Amendment Bill.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY explained that the measure was to extend the period during which any ex-service man, receiving any disability directly attributable to his service, could claim a pension. The period was now extended until July 31st, 1925. Certain other changes affecting payment to children of the pensioner and the augmentation of British pensions were also included.

The Bill passed Committee and was ordered to be read for the third time to-morrow.

The Highroads Commission Act was read for a third time, whilst the Firearms Act, the Highway's Traffic Act and the Income Tax Amendment Acts were deferred.

THE MINISTER OF MARINE & FISHERIES was presented to have the Lobster Act put up in Committee, but as Mr. Halfyard intimated that Mr. Scammell was ill and being interested in the measure, asked through him, that it might be deferred, the order was accordingly deferred.

The next order of business was what is popularly known as the Women's Franchise Bill. The second reading was moved by the Prime Minister, who said in part:—

HONOURABLE THE PRIME MINISTER:—Mr. Speaker: I consider it both an honour and a privilege to introduce to this House this afternoon for Second Reading a Bill which has for its object the granting of the Franchise to the women of Newfoundland. I do not commend this Bill to the House simply because the ladies have asked me to do so; I do not bring the measure forward in a spirit of indifference as to how the House might see it; but I bring it forward this afternoon with a full feeling of honest conviction, that in granting this request of the ladies this House of Assembly will only be doing something that has been deserved, and what we owe the ladies during the past number of years. This is not the first time that this measure has been brought before this House of Assembly. A Bill was introduced here in 1920 and also in 1921, and, perhaps, before we go any further it might not be any harm if I were to revive the memories of some of the Members who were in the House at that time as to what did happen, and also of those who were not present then as to what took place during those years. On May 20th, 1920, Mr. LeGrow who was then a sitting Member for the District of Bay de Verde, presented a petition to the House signed by seven hundred women of St. John's asking for the Franchise. That petition was supported by Mr. Fox, Mr. Higgins, Mr. Vinnicombe and Sir John Crosbie. No one opposed it, and it was referred to the Department to which it related. I am inclined to think that the Prime Minister of that day concluded that the Department to which that petition related was the waste-paper basket, because it disappeared and we have not heard of it

since. A month later our much respected present Speaker, Mr. Fox—Member for St. John's East—asked leave to introduce a Bill, and on June 10th, 1920, a Second Reading of the Bill was moved by Mr. Fox, supported by Mr. Vinnicombe and Mr. Walsby, and it was opposed by two Members of the Government, Mr. Guppy and Mr. Jennings, who moved that it be given the six months' hoist. A vote was taken on the Bill, and it was defeated on a straight Party Vote, 13 to 9, the Government voting solidly against. Mr. Targett had expressed this intention to vote for it, but I do not think he was present when the vote took place. That was the end of the first period, and the end of the Bill for 1920.

In 1921 Mr. Warren presented a petition signed by 7,485 women, and he called the attention of the House to the fact that every District in the Island was represented except his own. He said he did not intend to introduce a Bill that season, but it might be that a Bill would be introduced before the next General Election. Mr. Higgins and Mr. Bennett supported it, and the Prime Minister who spoke in favour of it, stated that it would not be a party measure. On May 16th, or about a week later the Prime Minister intimated to the House that he would introduce a Bill to amend the Election Act of 1913. Apparently it remained on the Order Paper until August 6th; and might I say the length of the sessions held in those days causes me no wonder that some of the Members of the Outport District wanted their sessional pay increased because it was apparently not unusual to have a session of three or four months duration. After that it was on the Order Paper for three months and then it was Mr. MacDonald who relieved the embarrassment of the Government to some extent by asking that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee and that was the last that was heard of it and there ended the session. So, Mr. Speaker, when we consider the way the ladies have been treated and when we come to consider the way in which they continue to come here in their hundreds this afternoon and still smiling, I say that I cannot, even though we might be the hardest hearted in the world and the greatest women haters in the world, help but admire their behaviour in this matter. I said that this was not a party measure. I have not asked a single Member of this side of the House how he intended to vote or what were his intentions with regard to this Bill. I think, however, there is one member whom I think I can assure the ladies is prepared to support the Bill. I canvassed the District of Bonavista Bay three times in eighteen months and when speaking at public

meetings Captain Winsor never lost an opportunity to tell the ladies, who often attended the meetings in very large numbers that he would be prepared to support the Bill to the last ditch. Capt. Winsor is looked upon as the ladies man of the party. So, Mr. Speaker, even if I cannot speak for any other members of this side of the House I think that I can speak for Captain Winsor because I think that he could hardly go back to the District of Bonavista and tell the women that he did not support the measure. Now when I say that it is not a party measure I do not say that is not an important measure, because it is, it is extremely important. In it we must be prepared to double the franchise of the people of this Island. We are prepared to double up the responsibility and that is something that no member should consider other than very carefully. He cannot look upon it as a joke. It is a serious matter and one that cannot but be well considered in this House.

I have seen where some of the members of this House said that they could not do anything without first consulting their constituents. In this case the constituents have been very well consulted. This Bill has been up since 1920 and I feel satisfied that members of this House can well assume that their constituents are in accord. So, Mr. Speaker, I say that while it is not a party measure it is an important measure. I said in my remarks at the opening of this Assembly that there are three questions which we had to ask ourselves and the first and most important is whether we will give the franchise to women at all. Before we answer that question I think that we ought give some little consideration to what our neighbours have done and what has been their experience and what has been the result of their actions. We find on going over the records that New South Wales, a colony of Australia, granted the Municipal Franchise to the women in 1867, or 58 years ago. The first country that granted the full franchise was New Zealand in 1893, or thirty-two years ago. The colonies of Australia formed themselves in to a Commonwealth in 1901 and at the very next session of the legislature they voted a full measure of franchise to the women. In Canada we find that the first franchise was given the women in 1917. That was when Sir Robert Borden went to the country on the question of conscription and a Bill was passed to permit the widows, mothers and daughters of the members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force to vote at that election. In 1918, the next year, the Canadians got the full measure of the franchise at the age of twenty one for women. Now let us turn to the Old Country and see what they have done. The lawlessness of the suffragettes is a very well known historic feature in England. They mobbed the Cabinet ministers, chained themselves on the railing of Downing Street, they went on hunger strikes and had to be forcibly fed, they assault-

ed public historic monuments such as St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, the British Museum and the National Gallery. The House of Commons had to have the doors guarded against the entrance of women. I feel that there are many in this room who think that this action on the part of the women did not advance their interests at all. I feel sure that most reasonable women is very admirable in as much as it was very courageous at the same time we cannot but think that it did not do anything to advance the matter in the opinion of that time. Whilst this widening movement on the part of the suffragettes was going on the war came on and the suffragettes dropped their enthusiasm to go about the business of the war. I need not relate what the women of England did during the war. Everybody knows how they took the men's places in every phase of life and contributed so enormously towards the result of the war. I need only state that the result was that when Parliament met in 1918 they voted a full measure of franchise for the women of England at the age of thirty by seven to one,—the same parliament that had refused the vote to women sometime previously. In 1919 a further provision was made to give the right to women to become justices of the peace and to sit on juries. I may say that in connection with that matter a cousin of mine, a sister of Mr. Alderdice of the Colonial Cordage Company, is a Justice of the Peace in the North of Ireland and I am satisfied that she is able to do the duties of the office as well as any man who ever held the position. The first women to be elected to the British House of Parliament was strangely enough an enemy of Great Britain and an alien. She was the Countess Markievicz and was the first to be elected to the British House of Commons. The Irish Sinn Feiners refused to sit in the House of Parliament to which they had been elected so that Lady Astor was the first woman to sit in the British House of Parliament. In 1923 there were seven women elected to the House of Parliament in Britain; in 1924 the number was reduced to three. So then it does not seem that the women are going to take possession of the House at the present time. That is the history of what the mother coun-

try has done up to the present time. The Prime Ministers of New Zealand and Australia were over in England a short time ago and they were asked what their experience was and they both said that it was a very great success and that they would not repeal the Act for any thing. All over the American continent the suffrage has been given and things have been appreciably improved there. We find ourselves together with South Africa the only English speaking country in the world which has not given the franchise to the women. South Africa is largely populated by the Boers who are not English speaking and therefore we are the only English speaking people who have not granted the franchise, and it is hardly British fair play to treat this matter in that way. And I want to ask you to-day why we are in this position and why we have not given the vote to women. Surely our women did as much during the war as the women of any other country. I say, Mr. Speaker, that after considering whether we shall give the vote to women at all or not the balance so far seems to be in their favour.

(Continued on page 3.)

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- (a) on a signal made to her by one of His Majesty's ships, including any vessel under the command of an officer of His Majesty's navy or full pay, and
- (b) on entering or leaving any foreign port and
- (c) if of fifty tons gross tonnage or upwards, on entering or leaving any British Port.

(2) If default is made on board any ship in complying with this section the master of the ship shall for each offence be liable to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds.

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