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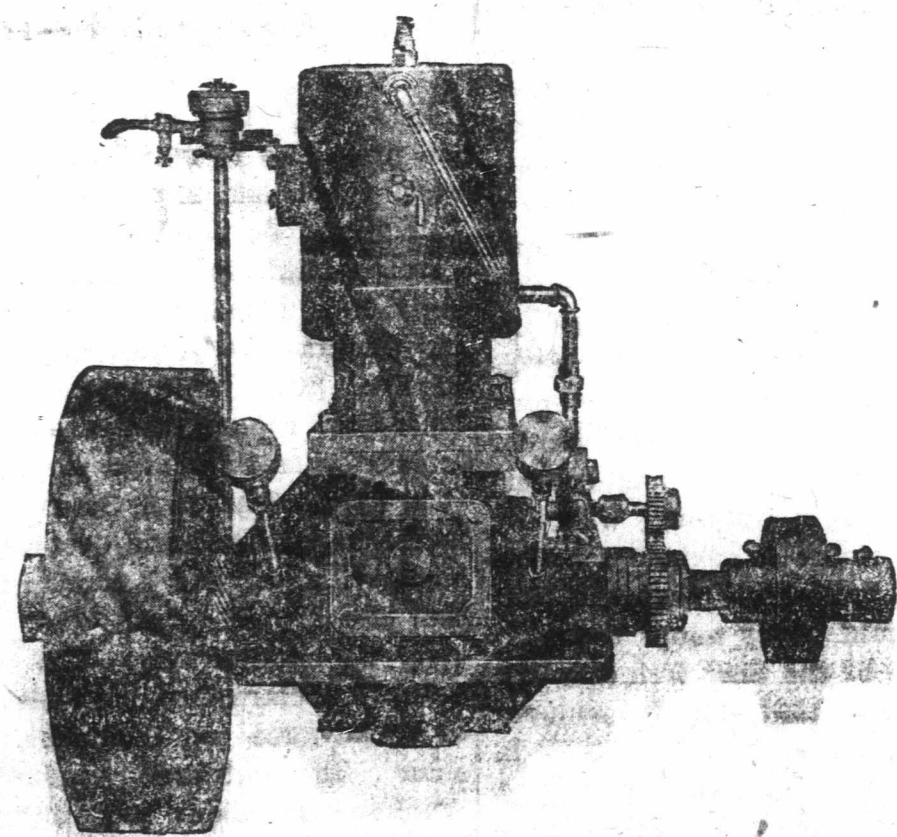
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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Seventh Session of the Twenty-Third
General Assembly.

TUESDAY, May 7th, 1918.

HON. J. ANDERSON (Continued)—

The point I wish to make is that St. John's East and West are not being represented in the Lower House, and that the National Government of today is only a burlesque. We have a government composed of Hon. Mr. Lloyd, Hon. Mr. Coaker, Hon. Mr. Crosbie, Cashin, and Mr. Ellis and Mr. Clift and others, all excellent gentlemen, but a peculiar and most marvelous combination; and it is the first time in the history of the colony at least as far as I know when the capital of the colony has never been properly represented in the Lower House or on the Executive.

When I say it is a burlesque, it is better, it is a dramatized comedy. Now there is a note of warning sounded: I note in the Telegram tonight, and that is that this combination is about to lead us into confederation. It is called "the plot." I am not acquainted with the plot, but so far as I am concerned, I dare them to lead this country into confederation at least without the people's consent. Now we have had so many ministers created in this country during the past two years I do not know whether any of them are likely to occupy ministerial positions other than political; but there is one thing I would suggest and that is that in addition to the other ministers, there be created a Minister of Economy. A year ago when we were discussing the Business Profits Tax Bill, the Government got an extension of time to carry it out. If the government at that time had taken the advice of those who were opposed to that tax, not with any hostility to the government because they were only too anxious to do everything possible to carry it out, but if they had taken the advice relative to an Income Tax on the lines of the Dominion of Canada Act, we would be better off to-day. It should make little difference whether ideas come from the Government or the Opposition, if they are good, they should be accepted. But last year when the Lower House retired to their Chamber and introduced a bill to clip the wings of this House, and some of the vile speeches made at that time were no credit to the country of those who made them, this House was not represented in the spirit they wished to be represented to the country. There were misrepresentations and every conceivable attempt was made to lower and degrade this House; and I do not care a rap whether the government, or any government passing measures to carry out vindictive policies it is not fair or reasonable. Notwithstanding all these facts I believe the government are in earnest in the carrying out of this Conscription Bill, and if I did not believe so, I would not be a party to supporting the second reading of this measure, because as I have said before, the representation in the Lower House is not only a burlesque and a comedy, but it ought to be dramatized.

I could understand a National Government being composed of the best brains the country could produce at this time; I could have understood a National Government if composed in 1915; I could have understood a National Government at this time if composed equally of members of both sides, but what do we find? Out of two parties in 1913, with a Government membership of 21, and an Opposition of 15, we find six Opposition and three Government men in the Executive to-day. That is not a National Government; if you want a National Government you should have an equal number of both sides. Mr. President, the life of the Government expired 30th October last, but it has had a resurrection. We gave them one last year, now we are giving them another on conditions, and they are, that if Confederation is going to happen, the people of this country are to have an opportunity of expressing their opinion. I note the Minister of Finance anticipates a revenue this year of over five million dollars. He is going to get it, for with ad valorem duties on our commodities, and with the prices of everything in some cases three times as much as before the revenue will correspondingly benefit. And with foodstuffs all over the world advancing, I would not be surprised at our fish being worth this year from 12 to 15 dollars a quintal.

Mr. President, I am going to support the second reading of this bill, and I re-echo I do so for two reasons: first, the government in the carrying out of the Conscription Bill will be serious and in earnest; and second, that by any question of an international nature which may arise at any moment, the people will have a voice. So far as the Conscription Bill is concerned, I should like personally to see my hon. friend the Minister of Militia severed from party politics, and to have plenary powers in the carrying out of that act, and the executive to have no control. It is a military measure, and the Government are only artificial soldiers. One man will do more than your board of four or five, because there will be no strings to pull. As it is they are bound to be pulled the wrong way. And I believe if the power were given entirely to the Minister of Militia it would be more satisfactory to the government and to the country, and would give better results. Under ordinary conditions were we not faced with this Conscription Bill I would vote at once for the dissolution of the government and an appeal to the country. For these reasons I support the second reading.

HON. MR. HARVEY—I have very much pleasure in congratulating my hon. friend opposite on his witty and wise speech. I feel that what we want here is a clear daylight on the broad situation, and daylight is the specialty of Hon. Mr. Anderson. The great question with me is what effect this measure is going to have on our war effort. I have listened to the most eloquent address from the hon. gentleman on my left, but what interested me most was the question why he had not delivered it at the last session. I may be astray in my interpretation of the matter but I cannot see that there is anything particularly sacred about the four year term. I know my hon. friend thinks differently and feels strongly that the freedom of the people is wrapped up in this four year period. But, if so then why did he agree to and urge the extension of the life of parliament last year if he now feels that it is such an absolutely essential matter that the life of the present parliament should be no longer extended. The fact is that the four year period was merely created by an Act of the Legislature of Newfoundland, and this Legislature can alter that period if it thinks it is in the interest of

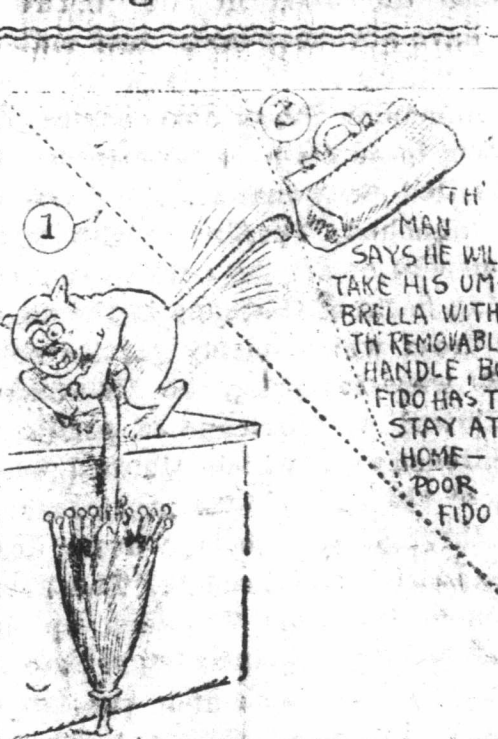
the country to do so. We altered it last year, the English Parliament has altered it several times and notwithstanding all the constitutional authorities quoted here, we are up against the fact that Great Britain has extended the life of its Parliament two or three times and that this Legislature extended its life last year. I feel that the call, the necessity and the cause which induced the Legislature to do this last year are infinitely stronger this year than last, and I find it difficult to believe that Hon. Members of this Council who are one and all united to see the Conscription Bill through, to keep the Colony in the war, I cannot believe they will jeopardize it by a refusal to extend the life of Parliament. I cannot understand how people can think of it otherwise than as making for the success of our war effort. Talking about Government departments, and our having the Militia Department to carry it out. No Department in the country has any vim behind it in my experience unless they have the mainspring and steam pressure of the Executive behind them. I may say, however, on the other side, that I could sympathize with many of the arguments put up. The situation as it stands today may be wrong. I am quite willing to admit that. The non-representation of the districts by the failure to hold bye-elections is constitutionally wrong and indefensible. Judging by the extracts read here this evening it was one of the duties of the Governor to hold these bye-elections within six months of vacancy. I do not criticize our late Governor, he was a very able, careful, patriotic man, and he may have had good reasons for not issuing writs, but if any case it was not questioned by the Legislature last session. I doubt whether members of this Council knew the law, that it was the duty of the Governor to issue writs within six months after vacancies occur. This omission was not considered during last session and no criticism was heard against it. There were a good many vacancies then in the Lower House. Furthermore the very strong argument that we have had put up here as to the illegality of gentlemen holding positions of emolument under the Crown and retaining their seats in the House seems to me to be no illegality at all at the present moment. Surely at the last session of the Legislature we passed the same act which we now have before us and which also provided that "notwithstanding anything in previous acts a member shall not vacate his seat by reason of his acceptance of any office."

HON. MR. PRESIDENT—At the last session of the House the question arose as to whether the Minister of Militia, then about to be appointed, stood in any different position under the Act from other Ministers of the Crown, and I think it was my hon. friend (Hon. Mr. Harvey) who said he thought the position should be permanent, and I protested against being a party to any such appointment. Later we found that my hon. friend was wrong and that the Minister of Militia was to accept office under precisely similar conditions to those under which others did.

HON. MR. HARVEY—I do not remember any such thing and doubt if the House understood any such thing. The wording is identical with last year's act, which is absolutely clear as it stands and I cannot see any illegality in it in spite of the vigorous attack made on the position as being illegal. It may be improper possibly, although I do not say so, but to call the position illegal does not appear to me to be correct. We are all parties to it and nobody protested except the "Hon." President who says he did.

HON. MR. PRESIDENT—I did not protest against the proposition that there should be a Minister of Militia or that he should retain his seat without election, but I protested against the suggestion that the Minister of Militia was to enjoy a permanent office and pay, say, like the Postmaster General. I agreed with the principle of creating a Department of Militia with the Minister in charge responsible to the House and country like the other Ministers.

HON. MR. HARVEY—I do not want to argue the question in any abstract way, but I think I see daylight in the matter. It seems to me we must have conscription enforced with vigor, and I cannot see that a general election is not going to add to the difficulty. Last session I was unfortunate enough to have to propose or second the Address in Reply, and believing it to be the all important public question then I devoted my entire effort to an endeavor to show how absolutely important it was that there should be unity, amalgamation and resolute vigor on the part of the Government. It was hoped that amalgamation, not then in sight, would add vigor and force to the war effort. The amalgamated government are now showing vigor, are doing the right thing, having hesitated however for a

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W. F. RENDELL, Lieut.-Col.
Chief Staff Officer, for

Minister of Militia.

jnel, eod, 2w

(To be continued)