

Our Ottawa Letter

Debate on Quebec Riots was feature of the week in the House of Commons

(By The Guide's Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, April 5.—Parliament met this week under the shadow of the grave developments at Quebec, where riots arising out of the administration of the Military Service Act lead to bloodshed. When the house met on Tuesday, Sir Robert Borden made a statement covering these serious developments. Col. J. A. Currie, of North Simcoe, gave notice that on Thursday, he would move the adjournment of the house to discuss the riots as a matter of "urgent public importance." On Wednesday Sir Robert Borden amplified his statements, and on Thursday when Col. Currie made his motion he asked him to defer it until today because of important matters which had been considered by the cabinet of which he would make the house acquainted. When the house met this afternoon there was considerable excitement and a large attendance. Sir Robert Borden read two orders-in-council. One provided for strict suppression of rioting. The order greatly increases the powers of officers commanding Military Districts. In future such officers will, when they deem it necessary, have power to "use such force as he may determine to be reasonably necessary to quell and suppress such riot and insurrection." The new order, in a word, within any district prescribed by order-in-council, hands over to the military authorities the administration of the law and suspends *habeas corpus* proceedings.

Punishing Idleness

The second order-in-council makes idleness in Canada a punishable offense. The purpose is to prevent persons between the ages of sixteen and sixty years from remaining in idleness at a time when the services of all Canadians are urgently needed. Exceptions are of course made in the case of students, people physically unfit and workmen who are unemployed because of differences of opinion with their employers. A penalty not exceeding one hundred dollars is imposed on people who insist on being lazy when they should work and if they do not pay the fine they are liable to be given six months' additional rest in the common jail or sent to a public institution or farm.

In order to be allowed to proceed with his motion it was necessary for Col. Currie to secure the support of twenty-one members. He was lucky for when the motion was put just twenty-one rose in their places.

The debate which followed was what might have been expected under the circumstances. Col. Currie criticised the people of Quebec for their lack of interest in the war, the leader of the opposition and the government. He said the government was to blame for the lax manner in which the Military Service law had been enforced in the province of Quebec. Bourassa and Lavergne, he said, should have been interned. Instead the *Le Devoir*, Mr. Bourassa's newspaper had been favored with government advertising. He asserted that the government had received an unmistakable mandate to enforce conscription and that its supporters should be afraid to return home and face their constituents unless they make sure that the government carries out its promise.

H. H. Stevens, of Vancouver, in seconding the motion, declared that the government would not be well advised if it called out the second class under the military service act before taking every possible step to secure the men who should go to the front from the first class. He was disposed to criticize Hon. C. J. Doherty, Minister of Justice, and asserted that the administration of the act should not be in the hands of a citizen of a province, the majority of whose people are opposed to it.

Sir Wilfrid Blames Government

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, while declaring that the Military Service Act, having become the law of the country, must be enforced and respected, said that the

government was in some measure to blame for the disturbance at Quebec because of the class of men they had employed to round up delinquents. Belanger, one of the men concerned, he said, was an ex-bar tender with an unenviable reputation. "This man Belanger," he declared, "is as well-known in Quebec as Barabas was in Jerusalem." Eventually, another constable, he described as "a man of former good family but not now acceptable as a respectable citizen." Sir Wilfrid said he had opposed conscription because he was a man of common sense and knew that it would not work. He advocated persuasion rather than compulsory measures, and expressed the view that the order-in-council regarding rioting was not calculated to help matters because of its coercive tendencies. In closing he said, "We must have peace, we must have order, we must have protection of property and the law must be observed. I was not in favor of the Military Service Act, but it has been passed. It has received the sanction of the people of Canada and it must be obeyed."

Purpose of the Act

Sir Robert Borden commented on the circumstance that while Col. Currie and Mr. Stevens argued that Quebec was being treated too leniently, Sir Wilfrid Laurier took the other view.



A School Club Boy Taking His First Lesson in Candling Eggs

The conscription of all men in class one, he said, would not be in accordance with the principle of the Military Service Act. Its purpose was to take only those who would be more valuable at the front than at home. Under the Act, he said, 16,000 men had been brought to the colors during the past seven weeks. No such results could have been obtained under the voluntary system. While results were slow in Quebec, owing to the wholesale exemptions, in the end, the enrollment from that province would be large. There being still about 30,000 appeals to be disposed of. In closing, he said, that the government would not be fit to represent the people if it did not, when rioting occurs, deal with it with a strong hand.

Apprehension Over the Tariff

Considerable apprehension is being expressed at the Capital by the advocates of low tariff or free trade, because of the knowledge that steps are being taken to limit the amount of Canadian imports. The matter has been under review by the War Trade Board, of which Sir George Foster is the chairman, and which includes in its membership a number of the leading business men of Montreal and Toronto. The chief reason given for the proposed restriction of imports is the necessity for their curtailment, in order that the

adverse balance of trade which has operated seriously upon exchange may be corrected.

Canada's adverse balance of trade, insofar as the United States is concerned, amounts approximately to four hundred million dollars per annum. A report which appears to be generally accepted by the newspapers of the East asserts that importation of a number of lines of manufactured articles to the amount of about one hundred and fifty million dollars a year will be decided upon. It can be authoritatively stated that this is not official because Sir Robert Borden stated to the correspondent of *The Grain Growers' Guide* on Monday, that recommendations made by the War Trade Board have not as yet been reviewed by the Cabinet.

The fear is expressed that while restriction of imports may be necessary as a war, and after-the-war policy, there is a danger that it might be used in the interests of the protected interests. As a matter of fact the placing of the power to restrict imports in wrong hands might result in the most mischievous form of protection yet devised. *The Ottawa Citizen*, in commenting on the situation, says: "The recommendation for the War Trade Board with regard to the restriction of imports seem likely to be along the lines of conferring an absolute monopoly of the Canadian market on certain private manufacturing interests. The prohibition of non-essential imports may be necessary to compel economy. But the prohibition of imports must be accompanied by national control of the mills and factories in Canada; otherwise the effect of prohibiting imports would be to leave the

States to-day. Last year there were over two thousand prosecutions in the United States. This has been going on for years." Mr. Armstrong argued that the new minister of agriculture would be deeply interested in this matter because of the great development that has taken place in the dairy industry of the western provinces. He quoted figures to show that the farmers had increased their production of cheese and butter. Within the past few years the farmers have been able to supply practically the whole demand of Canada and have been able to export over seven million pounds of butter. The farmers, Mr. Armstrong asserted, had answered the call for increased production and it was extremely desirable that nothing should be done to discourage them in their efforts.

A considerable variety of opinion was given expression to in the debate which followed. It was generally agreed by the members that the admission of margarine into the country had been due to the demands made by the people residing in the cities and in the towns. There was also a decided disposition to think that while the step taken by the government might be acceptable as a war measure there should be a reversion to the old policy after the conclusion of the war.

Mr. Crerar on Margerine

Hon. T. A. Crerar, minister of agriculture, in dealing with the matter, admitted its importance to the farmers of Canada and predicted that high prices would prevail after the close of the war because of the demand that would arise for Canadian products in other countries. He said in part:—

"If we can establish the quality of our product—and there is no reason why we should not do that—we are going to get into the best markets of the world. We have the markets of Great Britain; we have more than that, we have the markets right across the line which will be open to us in the future, because of the growth of population in the United States east of the city of Chicago and with the distance the people of the east are from the western states, I am convinced that, as their industrial population increases, they must look more and more to Canada for the food that they require. Consequently I think the member for Lambton may rest assured that this government is not going to do anything that might harass, disturb or destroy the dairy industry."

"It is true that, to meet the shortages that have arisen in Canada, these regulations were promulgated and permission was given to manufacture this article and to import it into Canada. I believe that up to the present time some 400 licenses have been issued. Of these probably not more than one-third are actually engaged in the importation of oleomargarine, and the total imports up to the end of February were a little over 1,800,000. I realize, however, that it is a very vital question in respect of the industry that has been under discussion. If the honorable member for East Lambton will let his resolution stand, or if he will be good enough to withdraw it, I can assure him that the suggestion that he has made in his address and the suggestions made in other admirable addresses that have been delivered this afternoon will be taken into serious consideration." Mr. Armstrong's resolution was subsequently withdrawn.

Ottawa, April 2 (special despatch).—The most interesting recent debate occurred on Tuesday last, on the second reading of Sir Geo. Foster's Daylight Saving bill. Although it was a government measure the bill received considerable hostile criticism from members representing rural constituencies on both sides of the house. Most of the objection was voiced by what is known around the corridors of parliament as the Conservative "ginger" group of members from Ontario who are none to fond of the Unionist government. On the other hand, strong support of the bill came from a number of the followers of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Western critics of the measure, like eastern objectors, asserted that the advancing of the hands of the clock would be a positive detriment to agricultural production because farm laborers would want to quit during the best

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