

The Herald

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At The Federal Capital

Monday, March 31st was private Member's day in the House of Commons, and as usual, resolutions of one kind and another previously on the order paper of private members, were discussed. On this occasion almost all the discussion was in the direction of better conditions for the returned soldiers. The first resolution in this direction was advanced by Mr. McCurdy of Colchester, N. S. This resolution asked for preferential treatment in Civil Service appointments for disabled soldiers. It need not be said that this met with very strong support in the House, practically all the members on the Government side, at least, favoured this. After the matter had been fully discussed by the mover and other members of the House on the Government side, the Hon. A. K. MacLean, speaking for the Government, stated that everything that had been said was quite in line with the desire of the Government, to do everything possible to improve the conditions of the returned soldiers, and to make their advent into the Civil Service as reasonable as possible. He said that the Government intended bringing down to the House amendments to the Civil Service Act, which practically incorporated all that the members advanced in the resolution under discussion. Under these circumstances he thought that possibly the matter would not be pressed to a vote. This idea prevailed and after some words of explanation Mr. McCurdy withdrew his resolution. During the evening sitting Mr. Stevens of British Columbia introduced a resolution practically along the same lines embodying, in a general way, the improvement of conditions for returned men. Mr. Stevens' resolutions favoured technical or vocational training, for boys under military age, who had gone to the front nevertheless, and interrupted their education by enlisting in the Army, and also young men who had, in their second or third year University courses, abandoned their preparation for professional life and went to serve their country. He strongly recommended that the Government would make provision for the education of these who went away, and of these young men who were undergraduates of the Universities seeing that their education, interrupted by their going to the front, would not be allowed to lapse, and that proper provision should be made for their completing their course and enabling them to start life on the plane on which they had aimed before they were taken away. This met with equal approbation in the House and Mr. Rowell speaking for the Government stated that in a few weeks the Government would bring down propositions meeting the very cases that had been advanced in this resolution. As a consequence of this Mr. Stevens' resolution was not pressed to a vote. This practically constituted the work of Monday sittings of the House of Commons, with the exception of some little routine matters and answering of questions and odds and ends of that kind. House adjourned shortly before midnight.

Beyond the business of advancing some Government bills

from stage to stage, most of the time at the sittings of the House of Commons on April 1st was devoted to consideration of Imperial and Constitutional affairs. These questions were brought under review by Hon. N. W. Rowell, who has charge of the estimates for the Department of External Affairs. On moving the House into Committee of Supply to consider these estimates, he gave a lengthy exposition and explanation of the new status of Canada in her relation to the Mother Country in consequence of the developments at the Imperial War Conference and the Imperial War Cabinet. Mr. Rowell dwelt at very considerable length upon the questions engaging the attention of those statesmen gathered together in this Council and Cabinet. He unfolded to the House a large amount of information bearing upon the position of the Allies at the most critical time in the history of the war. From the information supplied by him, it is very evident that the situation for Great Britain and the Allies generally was at a certain time very much more critical than we were wont to suppose. Of course, we were in a general way cognizant of the fact that it was serious enough when the Germans were making their terrible drives, but the information supplied to us through the press was very fragmentary and did not convey the very serious situation and the stress to which the British and Allied forces were reduced. From the statements made by Mr. Rowell, we now know that 300,000 school boys in Great Britain, under the age of 18, had been drafted into the army at the most serious stage of the conflict. During his exposition of Canada's present relations to the Mother Country in consequence of the recent sittings of the Imperial War Conference and Imperial War Cabinet, Mr. Rowell was subjected to many questions by some Members of the Opposition, but he was always able to answer them satisfactorily, that is to say questions that were of serious and reasonable nature. There many questions and interruptions that were not to the point or anyway reasonable in their nature. Throughout the ordeal, he maintained his equilibrium and good temper, and everything passed off quite satisfactorily. After the house went into Committee of Supply, on Mr. Rowell's estimates, not very much was done as it was late at night. Progress was reported and the House then adjourned until Wednesday.

Wednesday was a very ordinary day in the House of Commons. It was, as already stated, private Member's day, and by the way, it is the last Wednesday that the private Members will have this Session, as the Acting Prime Minister stated that Wednesday the 9th would be devoted to Government business in preference to anything else, and all Wednesdays of the Session following thereafter. After several resolutions in the name of private Members had been disposed of, Government business was discussed for a brief time before the House adjourned at six o'clock. Among other things brought up was the matter of bank mergers, especially the amalgamation of the Bank of Ottawa with the Bank of Nova Scotia. Mr. Lemieux asked the Acting Prime Minister regarding this and backed up his question with a speech of some length as is his wont. The Acting Prime Minister explained the condition of affairs and the law and regulations regarding mergers of this kind. He pointed out that when the shareholders and other authorities of two different Banks had agreed on terms of amalgamation and nothing could be found of an improper character in the negotiations, there was no reason why the Minister of Finance and the Government should refuse. This matter of amalgamation has always proceeded according to these regulations. So far as the case of the Banks of Ottawa and Nova Scotia is concerned he was aware that a good deal of talk and reports in the newspapers has been indulged in, but whatever was set forth in this regard was simply of a sentimental nature and would have no bearing on the actual proceedings which led up to the amalgamation. Towards the close of the sitting, the Acting Prime Minister introduced a resolution which was afterwards embodied in a Bill relative to the export of gold from Canada. As a precautionary measure, the Government had brought in legislation at the beginning of the war that no gold, whether coin or bullion or in any other form would be allowed to be exported from Canada during the war, unless under such circumstances as the Minister of Finance and the Government might permit. Now the Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance considered that it would be prudent to extend this regulation for a period of two years in consequence of the unsettled condition of things and he deemed it prudent that this precaution be taken. It might not be necessary to enforce this regulation for the whole period of two years, but he thought it best to place that time limit on the scope of the Bill. Mr. Lemieux, shortly before six o'clock, moved the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing an important public matter. This is permitted under the rules of the House, if the matter is considered sufficiently urgent, but in the case in question, Mr. Speaker ruled that he did not think that the motion of Mr. Lemieux complied either in letter or spirit with the rule governing such cases. He pointed out that the practice of the Canadian House of Commons was that matters of this kind regarded as strictly urgent should be of present or very recent occurrence, but in the matter under consideration the object was to discuss in the House of Commons certain statements critical of the conduct of the Canadian Government in military matters. These statements were made by General Smart, who is a member of the Quebec Legislature, and by Col. Pratt, a member of the Ontario Legislature. The statements upon which the intervention was asked bearing upon this matter appeared in the public press, and Mr. Speaker pointed out that he did not consider that their appearance in the newspapers was a sufficient guarantee for their discussion in the House. He moreover showed that anything said or discussed in the Provincial Legislature might not be a proper matter for consideration in the Federal Parliament, as he did not think that it would be good procedure for one Parliament to be trenching upon the privileges of another. Upon this point, he ruled Mr. Lemieux's resolution out of order, and the House then adjourned.

Almost the entire sitting of the House of Commons on Thursday afternoon and evening were observed in the consideration of a bill, introduced by the Minister of Finance relative to the taking over and placing in the hands of a receiver the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. It will be remembered that, early in March, the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company notified the Government that, on a certain date, they would be obliged to discontinue operating the road in consequence of financial difficulties. As a matter of fact, large sums of money—many millions—had been loaned to this Company by the Government from time to time

and a further loan was sought during the latter days of February. The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company was guarantor for bonds of the Grand Trunk Pacific and were expected to arrange with the Government relative to securing the numerous loans made to the Grand Trunk Pacific; but it became evident to the Government that the Grand Trunk Railway Company were disposed to be delinquent in the carrying out of their arrangements with the Government. In consequence of this, the Government plainly saw that it would be not only bad policy, but bad business to make any more loans to the Grand Trunk Pacific, until the Grand Trunk Railway Company had satisfactorily adjusted their part of the bargain with the Government.

When matters reached this stage and it was evident to both the Railway Companies that the Government was not disposed to lend them any more millions, the Grand Trunk Pacific served notice that they would not operate their road after the tenth day of March. The Government, regarded this declaration in the light of a bluff, and, assuming that the Grand Trunk Pacific were figuring on the Government making them a loan rather than see the operations of the road discontinued and the serious dislocation of business and inconvenience and loss which this would entail. The Government had but two or three days in which to act, but they acted promptly, and availing themselves of the power and authority of the war measures act, appointed the Minister of Railways Receiver for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. This prompt action on the part of the Government saved the situation, and precluded the possibility of the dislocation of business and the loss and inconvenience to the public which the discontinuance of the operations of the Grand Trunk Pacific would necessarily entail. Under the Receiver, the operations of the road continued as usual, and business did not suffer. Now in order that no possible doubts might exist regarding the action of the Government in making the appointment of the Receiver by Order in Council. The Minister of Finance and Acting Prime Minister brings into the House a bill to confirm the Orders in Council creating the Receiver.

That is to say, to validate and place beyond the possibility of doubt, by Act of Parliament, the action of the Government in this matter. This should seem to all sensible men a very reasonable course of procedure, and the action of the Government was received by the House generally as most acceptable, but certain members of the opposition, apparently for no other reason than for opposition's sake, held up the bill during the whole afternoon and evening by discussions that seemed to have no real merit or foundation in fact. As all are aware, the Grand Trunk Pacific and National Continental Railway project is one of the white elephants inherited from the late Liberal Government, and a most expensive elephant at that. It will cost the Government a large amount of money to have this matter adjusted, but there is no alternative. Unless the Government operate the road and improve it so that its usefulness may be enhanced, it will cease to be operated, and all the money that has been put into it will be lost to the country. This must not be permitted to happen. During the course of the discussion, it was indicated by the acting Leader of the Government that the Grand Trunk Railway Company are now negotiating with the Government regarding the taking over of that Company. Of course, while negotiations are going on, the Government are not expected to make public information relative to what terms are under consideration. It may happen that the Grand Trunk Railway will become a part of the Government Railway system of Canada, as well as the Grand Trunk Pacific. The matter of Government ownership of railways is assuming a very important attitude at the present time, and if the Government may be able to make satisfactory arrangements in the taking over of the Grand Trunk

Railway, it may be of great value to Canada. If this eventuates, it will be perhaps not so much on account of the Government's desire as on account of the fact that no other alternatives remain to prevent tremendous financial losses to the country in the immense sums that were advanced to these railway companies from the federal exchequer.

On Thursday afternoon, Sir Louis Davies, Deputy to His Excellency, the Governor-General came down to Parliament for the purpose of giving the assent to several bills that had been passed by both Houses of Parliament. His advent to the Senate Chamber necessitated the offices of "Black Red," who duly proceeded to the House of Commons, and having executed in due form his three bows, informed Mr. Speaker that His Honour requested the attention of the House of Commons in the Senate Chamber. He then bowed himself out backwards. The precision and exactitude with which he performed these onerous duties won unstinted applause from the members of the Commons. The Speaker then, with members of the Commons, proceeded to the Senate Chamber, where the ceremony of assenting to the bills was performed. The whole business occupied only a few minutes.

The attention of the House on Thursday was engaged almost entirely, during the afternoon and evening sittings, with the consideration of the bill creating a Federal Department of Public Health. This bill had been fore-shadowed in the speech from the throne, at the opening of the session. The bill was introduced by Hon. Mr. Rowell, President of the Privy Council. In a lengthy speech, Mr. Rowell explained the different features of the proposed legislation. After the bill was read a second time, and committed to a committee of the whole House, its different features were discussed at a considerable length, mostly by the doctors, who are members of the House. Lay members did not, to any great extent, intervene in the discussion as it was largely of a technical character. Where the principal criticism seemed to be raised in connection with the bill was in regard to provincial rights. It was held by some that provisions of the new bill here and there might interfere with legislations regarding health which exist in all the Provinces. But the promoter seemed to satisfy all objections on this score, pointing out that the proper line of demarcation between the federal and provincial privileges would be duly observed. The discussion was kept up until after eleven o'clock, when progress was reported and the House adjourned until Monday, the 7th.

The Legislature

April 2, after the reading of the Governor's speech Mr. H. Huestis, O'Leary was appointed Sergeant at Arms and Benjamin McDonald was appointed an usher of the House.

Premier Arsenault moved that the sympathy of the House be tendered the family of the late Hubert Howatt who had died since the House last met. He referred feelingly to the late member saying that since becoming a member he had won the respect and endeared himself to both sides of the House. His passing was another reminder that our sojourn here is liable to be ended at any time.

The Leader of the Opposition seconded the resolution.

Mr. Howatt, he said, had warm friends on both sides of the House, and his loss would be keenly felt. Mr. John McMillan supported the motion in a few remarks of much feeling.

Mr. A. E. McLean also spoke.

After the appointment of the usual committee the House adjourned.

April 3. Before taking up the orders of the day the House adopted the Daylight Saving Time.

Mr. R. J. McLellan moved the address in reply to the Governor's speech.

When the House was last in session things did not look very good on the battlefields of Europe, but through the confidence, courage and resources of the Allies, directed against the enemy by that greatest general the world has yet seen, Marshal Foch, a change was brought about sooner than we expected, and the greatest defeat in the war history of the world was inflicted on tyrannizing Hun and his Allies. No such fall has happened since last this House met. Our gallant Canadians played a glorious part and helped in no small degree to bring about the great result. We mourn the loss of many who now sleep in Flanders Fields but we are proud of the spirit that animated them in fighting for freedom and justice and against the menace of Prussian militarism. Neither should we forget the heroism of the women of our country who abroad suffered hardships and even death itself, to bring comfort to the wounded soldiers, our praise is also due to the men and women at home who gave money and work in the great cause.

The reception given the Governor General showed that while other monarchies and empires are in utter disorder and chaos ours, if that were possible, is having a firmer hold on the hearts of the people.

All that can be done for the returned soldiers must be done. We cannot repay the debt we owe for the work they have done. The Federal Government is offering terms that will assist young men who wish to take up farming and fishing in this province.

Farmers had received more for eggs and wool on account of better methods of handling, fostered by the Government and when the Broad Gauge is completed still greater prices will be received for all our products and imports will be obtainable with greater advantage.

Teachers he thought should be better paid. They rendered an important service and that service would suffer when the pay is too small.

Mr. H. McLean seconded the resolution. He felt that we should be truly thankful for the happy termination of the war, and he felt confident that the peace terms would be quite satisfactory.

Our soldiers and sailors have shown great valor and endurance in this struggle and our nurses have displayed equal courage and devotion.

The farmers and fishermen of the province had been prosperous the last few years and he did not think that any young man of pluck would fail in either of these occupations in the years to come.

The broadening of the railway gauge would make times better than ever in the province. Good teachers will not remain where they are improperly paid. We have a duty to perform to the children in the schools and if education is not looked after as it should, serious loss will be sustained by the country.

He recalled the long period of twenty years, when with public works neglected their friends opposite were never in a single instance able to make ends meet. Under the present regime with its yearly surplus, the affairs of the province adequately provided for, the people are satisfied.

Mr. J. H. Ball Leader of the opposition congratulated the mover and second of the address, while he did not agree with all they said. Great was the change in the war situation since the House last met. The conduct of Canada's soldiers in the war brought forth an eloquent tribute from the speaker. By their gallantry they had blocked the road to the channel ports and thus saved the situation and the Empire. Mr. Bell at 6 o'clock moved the adjournment of the debate.

April 4, House met at 11:30 a. m.

The Premier gave notice of a bill respecting public offices.

Mr. Johnston gave notice of a resolution regarding the reduction of the customs tariff, seconded by Mr. McMillan.

The Leader of the opposition then resumed the debate in reply to the speech from the throne. He dwelt at some length on the claims which the province had against the Dominion notably the Manitoba Precedent and the claim arising out of the extension of boundaries of Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, and the claim for a fair and just portion of the school lands of the Northwest.

(Continued on page 3)

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April 2, 1919—21

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