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Our Ottawa Letter

Parliament Nearly Finished—Franchise Bill Big Subject of Debate.
(By The Guide's Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, Sept. 13.—The long drawn-out session at last shows signs of drawing to a close. With the passage through the Commons under the closure rule of the War Times Election Act this week, the last piece of contentious legislation has been disposed of by the lower house. The bill now goes to the senate. When it was introduced there was some talk of the opposition in the Commons and the Senate combined holding the measure up until the expiry of the life of parliament on October 7. This plan appears to have been abandoned by the Liberals who realize that it would be practically impossible for the senate to keep up the fight on the bill for the remaining three weeks this parliament has to live. The probabilities are that if the upper house were to enter upon such an enterprise the government would introduce in the senate chamber the same closure rule which has facilitated the adoption of the bill in the commons after only a few days' discussion.

It has been observed that the members of the opposition do not appear to be as strenuously opposed to the new franchise act as they were in the beginning. This is doubtless due to a realization of the fact that its adoption is inevitable, combined with the belief that while the disfranchisement of naturalized citizens of alien enemy birth will improve the government's chances at the approaching election, the after-effects of the bill may be to the advantage of those who opposed it in parliament.

Some of the principal objections to the measure, put forward in the commons by the Liberals were that disfranchisement of naturalized citizens constituted a breach of faith with the people; that the enfranchisement of the female relatives of soldiers only was unfair to the rest of the women of Canada; and that the machinery provided for the making up of the lists is such as to make possible frauds of a serious character.

Westerners Opposed

Some of the strongest speeches against the bill were made by Liberals who voted for Conscription, including Mr. George McCraney of Saskatchewan, Dr. Neely of Humboldt and James Douglas of Saskatchewan. They all claimed that there was no valid reason for the disfranchisement of the naturalized Canadians in the West who come from enemy countries. The government, they said, had admitted that it had no charge to make against these people. They had behaved well and the proposal to deprive them of their franchise was characterized as another "scrap of paper" incident.

In regard to the extension of the Dominion franchise to the female relatives of soldiers overseas, the opposition maintained that this practically meant the disfranchisement of at least one million women in the provinces where they now possess the right to vote in provincial election contests. They asserted that a great injustice would be done by the bill

to the thousands of women who have devoted their energies to war work since the outbreak of the war but who have no immediate relatives in the Canadian expeditionary force.

Borden Favors Woman Suffrage

Sir Robert Borden in replying to this argument said that it would not be advisable to extend the franchise to all women until the naturalization laws have been changed in some respects. This because a woman of foreign birth who marries a British subject becomes a British subject. He also urged that it would not be desirable at the present time to give the right to vote to the wives and families of a large number of people who have recently arrived in the country. The prime minister declared himself in favor of the principle of woman suffrage and admitted that the time was coming when the women must in this respect enjoy the same privileges as men. The prime minister and Hon. Arthur Meighen who had charge of the bill warmly defended the disfranchisement features of it. Mr. Meighen made the statement that a great number of these people would be pleased to be relieved of the necessity of voting during war time. Consideration of the bill in committee was productive of a number of amendments, one of which provided that in the cities and larger towns the polls will open at six o'clock in the morning instead of at nine o'clock. At the moment of writing the final division on third reading has not taken place, but under the closure rule it will be adopted at two o'clock tomorrow morning and the measure will then be ready for the senate. In the voting which has taken place so far, the only Liberal member who had given support to the bill was Hugh Guthrie.

During the debate on the third reading under the restrictions of the closure rule, as well as on previous occasions, the members of the opposition took exception to the provisions of the bill concerning the details of the plan for the making of a federal list and the taking of the vote. They asserted that altogether too much power was being put in the hands of the enumerators to add to and strike off the provincial lists which will be made the basis of the Dominion lists. F. R. Carvell, who protested more vigorously than anyone else, perhaps, described the measure as "the most outrageous legislation introduced in Parliament in my time." He argued that down in New Brunswick, at least, the enumerators would be the most violent Conservative partisans to be found and that the lists would be made up in the "kitchens" of the men chosen for the work. They would have the power to put on or leave off any women, at their own sweet will and women suspected of an intention to vote against the government would be disfranchised even if they had relatives at the front.

Mr. Meighen in reply maintained that Mr. Carvell's fears were groundless because the voting, after the election would be subject to judicial review in

the event of any protest being entered. He asserted that everything possible had been done to make the bill a fair and workable measure. Mr. Carvell was not convinced however and insisted that the bill was a jumble of words which no man could understand and which would lead to confusion and worse.

Clifford Sifton's Unpopularity

This evening, Dr. Neely, of Humboldt, moved in amendment to the third reading that all the clauses of the bill providing for the disfranchisement of Canadian citizens should be struck out but the proposal was voted down by the government majority. In doing so he asserted that the Prime Minister could not expect to bring about the organization of a Union government, and introduce such legislation. The first blow had been given to Union government, he asserted, when Sir Robert Borden sent Sir Clifford Sifton West with portfolios in his pocket, because the West had no confidence in Sir Clifford Sifton.

Sir Robert Borden: "The hon. gentleman is absolutely inaccurate. I did not send Sir Clifford Sifton West. He went entirely on his own initiative and so far as I am aware he had no promise of any portfolio to anyone."

Dr. Neely replied that Sir Clifford at least had the "blessing" of the Prime Minister.

Senate is Active

Over on the Senate side of Parliament there has been more industry than usual this week. After much discussion the C.N.R. Bill has been finally disposed of. The prediction that the measure might meet with defeat at the hands of the members of the upper chamber has not been realized, the third reading being adopted by a majority of eight. The Senate will not spend a great deal of time on the War Time Elections Act which will probably go through after a couple of days' discussion. The Railway Committee of the Upper House have been wrestling with the revision of the Railway Act which engaged the attention of the railway committee of the lower chamber for six weeks. Some amendments have been adopted and the bill will have to go back to the commons for concurrence. One clause of the bill struck out by the Senate provides that provincial railways which passed into the hands of federally controlled railways shall come under Dominion jurisdiction and the railway board.

There is still talk of government re-organization after the house progresses. According to the government press half a dozen of the members of the government will retire in favor of Liberals. Possible new ministers, it is said, will include J. G. Turill, Hugh Guthrie and Hon. A. I. Sifton, of Alberta. That there will be government re-organization is certain, but to what extent it will include representatives of the Liberal party and other interests such as agriculture and labor is not known at the present time.

The coloring matter in milk and butter is carotin, so called since it was first found in carrots. It is not made by the animal but comes from the food. This coloring substance is found in all green leaves, which accounts for the yellow butter in summer. By continued feeding of feeds free from coloring matter it is possible to obtain white butter from a Jersey cow.



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