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ENLIST TO-DAY!

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Seventh Session of the Twenty-Third General Assembly.

TUESDAY, May 7th, 1918.

HON. JOHN HARVEY (Contd.)—very long time. That Government, minus two gentlemen who are members of this House, and whom I regret they have lost, is the same Government for all practical purposes. The principal change is in the Prime Minister. I am not in any way holding any retainer for the Government; far from it. Anybody who followed the debates of last year will recognize I am prepared to fight the Government when I think they are wrong, and I have no particular desire to blow their trumpet, but I will say I would infinitely sooner see the Conscription Bill in the hands of Premier Lloyd to be put through vigorously and honestly, than in the hands of Premier Morris, for after what I cannot but term that gentleman's outrageous and unjustifiable diatribe upon the attitude of this House as one of his last acts as responsible Premier of Newfoundland, his deliberate attempt to lower with dishonor a number of gentlemen in this Chamber whom I will not put too high, were at least as honorable as Baron Morris himself, his effort to show that they were wrong when as a matter of fact they were right, and when he knew that they were right, I say, Sir, that the stigma of it will follow him whether he were a humble member of the House of Assembly here or a Peer of the Realm.

I feel that a man capable of taking such an attitude is not the man that I would choose to be in charge of the carrying out of this Act, and I infinitely prefer to trust the present Premier to put the Bill in force. I believe that he means to do it honestly and fearlessly. We have heard some speeches on Confederation. It is indeed a blessed word. What the present situation has to do with it I do not know, I do not believe the Government has the faintest idea of forcing confederation, and if they had they must put it through the Legislature and we can deal with it when it comes up. If this is a valid argument against the extension of the life of Parliament it beats me. We talk about the autocratic methods of government, but every democracy and every Legislature has had to follow such tendencies. Our own War Measures Act passed immediately after the outbreak of war followed the example of England and her Colonies, and endowed the Executive Government with exceedingly wide and indeed dictatorial powers. In a state of war such things are unavoidable. Democracy must abandon many of its cherished rights. It must abdicate some of its sovereignty and give up its powers. In time of war it has got to sink occasional rights to protect its ultimate life. I want to see this Government put this Conscription Act in force. We all want to see it put in force.

The Government has hesitated a long time, but now they have gone into the thing vigorously and properly. We must remember (and I am not discussing and will not defend the position of the F.P.U. members, and the alleged oath that they take) that this Act has been taken up now by them, they are definitely committed to it, and that being so, I hope it will be put in force by the Government, which if not dominated by, at least is very largely composed of members of the strongest fishermen's organization ever formed in this country, and this in my opinion is an imperative reason why they should be left to take charge of the Bill. If a general election is held, and another government elected, I would ask hon. gentlemen who have unbiased minds, what more could such other Government do towards the war effort than this government is now pledged to do? They might deal with minor matters more effectively, may conceivably correct errors like those in connection with bye-elections, or reduce expenditure, or they may not hit the main point. We must watch at this time their action towards the war and the Regiment, and if any other Government is in sight which can improve on the efforts this Government is making, and will make in this regard, then I would like to know something more about it, and until we can see where their efforts can be improved upon, I say, we should support this Government until the Conscription Act comes into force and we have had an opportunity to see what they can do with it. In regard to this Bill we must give the Government the chance to put the Legislative orders in force and give them time enough to do it. Not to do so would be to jeopardize the strong desire of all the hon. members who have expressed themselves upon the Conscription measure. I again emphasize my personally very strong view that the call of the day, and the necessity of maintaining our war effort demand the extension of

the life of Parliament.

Some do not know why bye elections should not be held. I am strongly of opinion that they ought to have been held but I think that it would be inadvisable to hold a large number of bye elections at once as it would be bound to create turmoil, would organize opposition to the Bill, and all sorts of specious arguments would be used against the Government, but really for the purpose of defeating Conscription, and what occurs in the case of a general election will be so though possibly to a lesser extent in the case of a number of bye elections. By degrees they ought to be held. I am not defending the position that bye elections ought not to be held, they should be held, if the success of Conscription is finally assured—but I reiterate my belief that we ought to retain the present Legislature until the Regiment is at the front again and with sufficient reserves behind it.

HON. MR. MILLEY—Before adjournment I would ask the leader of the Government if Baron Morris is at present a member for the district of St. John's West.

On motion of Hon. Mr. Ellis the House adjourned until 4.30 p.m. to-morrow.

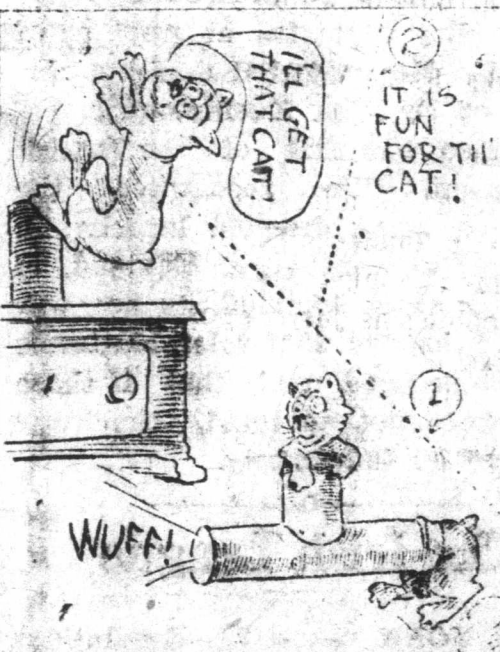
WEDNESDAY, May 8th, 1918.

The House met at 4.30 p.m., pursuant to adjournment.

Second reading of Parliament Extension Bill.

HON. MR. BISHOP—It appears to me that this House is asked to consider and discuss this Extension of Parliament Bill at an inopportune time. To have coupled it with the Military Service Bill was, in my opinion, a mistake, and it does not, as it seems to me, manifest on the part of the Government the Union or National idea of administration; it is not indicative of encouragement to "union," but is rather provocative of "party" opposition.

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The only reason advanced for extending the life of the present Parliament is that the excitement and turmoil of a general election will be so great that it will dominate everything else, that it will in event of an election, commence at midsummer and continue until the votes in the various districts are counted in November, and that the members of the Government will be so concerned about securing their re-election that they will neglect the needs of the Royal Nfld. Regiment, and of the requirements of the public in respect of tonnage, etc. Altho this has been stated by the gentleman who voices in this Chamber the opinion of the Government, I cannot think that he expects to be taken seriously, but if he does I refuse to believe that the Prime Minister, the Minister of Militia, Minister of Finance, Minister of Shipping, Minister of Fisheries and others will neglect the duties of their office and will disregard the claims of the public service, if an extension of their term of office is not conceded them.

The fear that such will happen has possibly influenced the hon. member and induced him to sound the warning, but I feel convinced such fears if he entertains them, are groundless. The Ministers of the Crown, Mr. President, will do their duty this year as faithfully as they did it last year whether this Bill passes or not.

Moreover, Mr. President, rumor has it that several of them will not be submitting themselves to their constituencies again, but be that as it may, the calling up under the Military Service Bill of Class 1 in May and Class 2 in September, or possibly not at all, cannot seriously interfere with the holding of an election in November, and those who most strongly urge that it will know as well as I do or you do, Sir, that it will not.

There may be other reasons which make it to seem most undesirable to have an election the coming fall, and if so, they should be advanced, but those who argued with such vehemence last year that an election should and must be held in October last, when the conditions were practically the same as they are now, cannot convince anybody that they have any sufficient ground for their change of front.

The very persons who tell us now we should avoid an election this year, turned and prepared for an election for this month. Were they acting without consideration for the requirements of our Regiment or of the country's trade? The condition a few weeks ago were worse and very much worse than they are at present, then no volunteers were coming in, now they are coming in in scores, thanks to the splendid efforts of the returned soldiers. It might with some reason be argued that a spring election would interfere with the season's operations, and with the year's trade possibly, but the voters in a fall election go to the polls when their season's operations are nearly finished, and who, Sir, in recent years has seen all this tumult in election years (that we are now being told so much about)? Now it has been represented here with much force and reason that the respect of the Government to have written issued and bye-elections held to fill vacancies afford sufficient reason, or refusing assent to this Bill.

Some vacancies have existed for quite a long period, but what is most extraordinary in this connection is, that the present Government, in appointing to permanent offices members of the Legislature, did not require of those members the resignation of their seats. It cannot be argued that this is proper, nor that it is beyond remedy. If their appointments did not deprive them of their seats the Government know what means to employ to end the anomaly.

The position taken by Hon. Mr. Milley and supported by other speakers in reference to the small number of members now sitting in the House of Assembly, must be acknowledged to be sound and reasonable, and instead of the seriousness of the present conditions surrounding us offering an excuse for delay, surely it is rather a reason why they should not continue longer and that writs for bye-elections should issue at once.

There is also much force in what the same hon. member says respecting taxation. I entirely concur in the idea of an income tax, as I do in a profits tax, and I know of nobody objecting to either one or the other, providing it is a reasonable and equitable tax, and not one ignoring all recognized rules of finance. There certainly was no reason shown last year why our Profits Tax should so greatly exceed the taxes levied in Great Britain and in Canada. When I left St. John's on July 31st last, the understanding was that 6 per cent. upon the capital invested in any business would be conceded, and upon profits earned beyond that figure 25 per cent. should be paid to the Government as tax. This would then have provided for taxation of profits considerably greater than is demanded by Canada or Great Britain but it would bear some resemblance to fairness.

(To be Continued.)

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Chief Staff Officer, for

Minister of Militia.

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