

VOTES FOR WOMEN AND WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

We give herewith a short synopsis of the proceedings of the last two years in the House of Commons in regard to Women Suffrage and quote the resolutions presented.

On February 23rd, 1916, Hon. Wm. Pugsley moved the following resolution:

"That in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that the Government should promote legislation to amend the Dominion Elections Act, so as to provide that upon any province of Canada enacting legislation giving women the right to vote for members of the provincial legislature, such women as are on the provincial voters' lists, or as are otherwise entitled to vote for members of the legislature in such province, shall also, unless otherwise disqualified, have the right to vote at elections for members of this House."

and asked that the discussion of this resolution be proceeded with.

The Hon. Robert Rogers, who was on that occasion, leading the House asked that the resolution stand and come up for discussion on another day.

Accordingly on February 28th, 1916, the Hon. Dr. Pugsley again moved his resolution and in the course of his remarks stated:

"It will be observed that my resolution only proposes that the Government should frame legislation to provide that in those provinces where the right of suffrage has been granted to women by the legislatures, women in those provinces shall have the right to vote at elections for members of the House of Commons. The necessity for making some such provision, I think, will be abundantly clear from an examination of the Dominion Elections Act. An examination of the provisions of the Revised Statutes of Canada, Volume 1, chap. 6, shows that in respect to all of the provinces, except Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the Yukon Territory, there is no express prohibition of women voting. There is no express prohibition in the Dominion Elections Act against women in that part of Canada other than Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Yukon, voting for the Dominion House of Commons, and it might be very well argued that if, in that part of the Dominion which is not embraced within Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Yukon Territory women were placed upon the provincial voters' lists they would have the right to vote in Dominion elections."

After several speeches had been made Dr. Pugsley's resolution was negatived on division.

During the same Session of Parliament namely, March 10th, 1916, the Hon. Frank Oliver read to the House a telegram from the President of the Women's Institute of Alberta which was as follows:

Edmonton, Alta., March 9, 1916.

Hon. Frank Oliver,
Ottawa, Ont.

As we have had no reply to previous telegram, will you as member for Edmonton present the following to Sir Robert Borden: "The Women's Institute of Alberta and the Women's Industrial Association of Edmonton, at luncheon to-day wish to know if your Government has definitely decided against woman suffrage. Have we

anything to hope from you?"

Sir George Foster who was leading the House on that occasion replied to Mr. Oliver in the following terms:

"Sir George Foster:—I hope my hon. friend will be kind enough to send me that telegram. I will convey the wishes of the ladies to the Prime Minister, and if the hon. gentleman will bear the expense of a telegram, I hope he will beg the ladies to keep up their hopes until they get an answer."

At the opening of the 1917 session of Parliament it was found that Mr. Donald Sutherland, M.P., for South Oxford had placed upon the order paper the following resolution and that the Hon. Dr. Pugsley had given notice that he would again bring to the attention of the House the question of Woman Suffrage.

On May 16th, 1917, Mr. Sutherland's motion which was as follows came up for discussion:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the question of extending the franchise to women should engage the attention of the Government at the present session."

In the course of Mr. Sutherland's remarks he stated:

"I say that justice, humanity and the best interests of society demand that our present Election Act shall be changed, and that provision shall be made so that our women shall have a voice and a fair share in the Government of the country. Further than that, I also wish to say that, if some provinces of Canada lag behind in the matter of granting the franchise to the women of those provinces, it makes it all the more imperative on this Parliament and Government to see that equal justice is done to the women of all the provinces of Canada."

Mr. William Wright of Muskoka seconded Mr. Sutherland's motion and in part stated as follows:

"I am no new convert to the principle of allowing the ladies to have the vote. A proposal was made last year, and a similar proposal has been made during this session, that the women of certain provinces be given the right to vote. I am opposed to the idea of singling out a particular province that may have granted to its women the right of the franchise. I believe that the women of the whole Dominion are entitled to the franchise; more than that, I believe that they have always been entitled to it. I have been in public life for upwards of thirty years and, having given some thought and attention to this subject, I never could see the justice of men arrogating to themselves the sole right to vote!"

Hansard, page 1549.

On the same date Hon. Dr. Pugsley made a strong speech in favour of Woman Suffrage. Dr. Pugsley, however, felt that Mr. Sutherland's motion was somewhat indefinite, and too general in its terms and that it did not commit the House or the Government, if passed, to anything except that the question of Woman Suffrage should be given attention.

Dr. Pugsley, therefore, asked leave that all the words in Mr. Sutherland's resolution after the word 'that', be struck out and the following substituted:

"That, whereas, in the provinces of Manitoba, Sas-