

# HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

## Synopsis of Debates.

TUESDAY, APRIL 23rd.

The House met at 12 noon on Tuesday, April 23rd, 1918. At 12.05 the House was summoned to attend His Excellency the Governor's Commissioners in the Legislative Council Chamber. His Excellency's Commissioners conveyed to the House His Excellency's command that they proceed to elect a Speaker for the House of the Chamber at three o'clock in the afternoon. The House thereupon returned to the Assembly Room, where Mr. W. J. Higgins, a Member for St. John's East, was unanimously elected Speaker.

The House then adjourned till 2.45 p.m.

The House met again at 2.45 p.m. At 3 p.m., at His Excellency's command, the House attended in the Legislative Council Chamber, when he was pleased to deliver the following Speech for Both Houses of the Legislature. (Speech already published.)

MR. SPEAKER and the House then returned to the Assembly Room, and Mr. Speaker read the Speech, of which for greater certainty he had obtained a copy.

MR. GRIMES moved for the appointment of a Committee to draft an Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. He referred first to the regret felt by the whole Colony in the departure of the late Governor Sir W. E. Davidson, whose interest in everything pertaining to the Colony, and whose energy in promoting its interests had endeared him to all; and he expressed a welcome to our new Governor, Sir Charles Harris, who would, he felt sure, be equally successful. He congratulated Mr. Speaker upon his appointment to that high office.

He was glad to see in the programme of the Session, a reference to a proposed measure for Selective Conscription. Up to recently he himself had forward a referendum upon the matter, but the necessity for immediate action was such as to demand a more rigid method of dealing with the situation. We must above all things take steps instantly to maintain the loyalty of the Ancient Colony; and he felt that the attitude of the people of Newfoundland towards this great question would prove their loyalty before the world. There was no time for delay in the face of such a powerful and treacherous foe as him whom we are at present fighting. We must not, and we will not fall short in the supreme hour of our destiny.

Conscription is more democratic than Voluntary Service. Why should one parent give all while another with an equal number of sons goes free? A system which takes men first from those homes where there are several sons, rather than where a son is the sole support, is the only fair, free and democratic system.

He was especially pleased to note the proposal to raise a local victory loan. There were fifteen millions of dollars lying in Savings Banks, earning three per cent. interest; why not put it into a public loan, and let the people get six per cent. on it, as well as saving money to the country, as a whole, by not having to go abroad, and raising it at seven and a half per cent.

He considered that the manner in which the Tonnage Committee had grappled with a very complicated question was very satisfactory. They had managed to prevent a tie up of our fish exporting industry, and, assisted as well by the splendid protection of the British Navy, as by good fortune, they were able to avoid difficulties which might have brought disaster to the Dominion.

In his opinion the intervention of the Government between the sealers and the owners of the sealing ships was fully justified, and was in accordance with precedent all over the world, especially in war time.

The increase of imports from \$33,000,000 to \$43,000,000 was most gratifying, especially in view of the great difficulty of obtaining goods at the present time.

He was glad that the question of a possible salt shortage was being the object of close attention. The best quality of the fish from which the Dominion had suffered greatly of late, was thought by many to be largely due to lack of sufficient salt.

He understood that the War Profits Tax had netted \$350,000; and he was glad that Conscription of wealth had preceded conscription of property. He thought that

an income tax against all classes would be fairer.

He referred also to the Florizel disaster; we have lost many men of a type whom we could ill afford to lose, employers who had the affection of their employees. He urged that the bravery of the rescue parties would be suitably recognized.

The Food Control Board, of which he himself was a member, had had serious difficulties to contend with; he referred especially to certain cases in which it had been found impossible to fix prices without working grave injustice.

The problem of the returned soldiers was one which imperatively demanded attention; and this, he was glad to say, it was about to receive.

He hoped that every member of the House would unite in making this Session a Win-the-War Session.

MR. PARSONS apologized for having but little to say, in as much as he had only just been asked to second the motion and had not had time to give more thought to the matter. He extended a hearty welcome to Governor, Sir Charles Harris, and congratulated Mr. Speaker upon his selection to office.

With reference to the question of Tonnage, he thought that we did not sufficiently realize the value of the work of our mercantile marine; the sufferings of war were so far from us that we did not realize what hardships the sailors in our fish-carrying vessels underwent when torpedoed. He recounted the hardships and heroism of some of the survivors of one of the torpedoed vessels, belonging to his own constituency of Harbor Grace. They happened to be an Englishman, a Scotchman and an Irishman; and he thought it was an excellent illustration of the situation of the Empire to-day, when all three nations together were fighting for their lives and helping one another.

He felt it unnecessary to deal again with the ground so ably covered by his hon. friend, Mr. Grimes; but he desired to join with him in expression of sympathy to the relatives of those who had been lost in the "Florizel" Disaster; especially Mr. J. S. Munn whose interest in Harbor Grace to which he had given Shannon Park, was continual and active. He referred also to Messrs. Guilfoyle and Parmiter, both rising and energetic young men, and a loss to the community, patriotic and brave citizens.

He thought the substantial revenue increase in imports and revenue was very gratifying; and was glad that a victory loan was to be raised. Why should we not raise loans in the Country, and pay the interest within the Dominion instead of outside it.

Referring to our own political matters, he said that since the resignation of Sir Edward Morris, he himself and others with him, were absolved from party allegiance. They stood in the House now as free men, not bound to any Government. He stood for one object only, to do all that he could for the war and the Empire.

He stood for Conscription, and he hoped to see a bill passed into law before the end of this week, which would make it the law of the Country. The need was today for Selective conscription; we owed it to our boys at the front, to whom we owed the greatest obligation of any that rested upon us. He congratulated the soldiers who had taken such an active interest in recruiting and had made such a successful campaign, and quoted some touching extracts from the diary of a soldier at Gallipoli, in proof of the high motives actuating our soldiers on the field of battle.

He spoke in high terms of the work done by the W.P.A., and in conclusion expressed his intention to adhere to the National Government, and to support it in the Conscription movement, because there was no time to be lost.

"Thrice armed is he who hath his quarrel first." He thought that the passing of the Bill would be unanimous; for England expected every man to do his duty. He had pleasure in seconding the motion for a Committee to draft an Address in reply.

MR. CURRIE congratulated Mr. Speaker upon his appointment. The Government, he thought, could not have made any better selection, and the House would have every confidence in him. He joined also in the welcome extended to His Excellency the Governor, whose character

had already commended him highly to the people of the Dominion, and who gave prospect of great success in his high office. He also extended sincere congratulations to the Prime Minister upon his attainment to that position, though he could not altogether approve the methods by which it had been attained. He congratulated the mover and seconder of the motion upon the addresses they had made.

He was glad the Government had outlined a bold programme and laid their cards on the table.

With regard to the prosperous result of last year's operations, he could not agree that it was the result of any exertions of the Tonnage Committee; for much of the period for which they were taking credit was before they were appointed. He thought any credit there was for keeping trade and markets open belonged entirely to the merchants and not to the Committee. The transactions connected with the "Rutjenfel" did not reflect credit on the Tonnage Committee.

He deplored deeply the disaster to the "Florizel" which had meant great loss to our community. It was absolutely essential that immediate consideration be given to protection of the Coast between St. John's and Cape Race. More light-houses, bell buoys, or some such devices ought to be installed. This place was truly called "The Graveyard of the Atlantic," and we must do something to make it safer for our travelling public.

While realizing the difficulties which beset the Food Control Board he thought the time had come when the Board should consider the question of rationing our people. At present we had plenty of food, in that matter we were perhaps the most favoured people on earth; but it was very poor patriotism to take everything on the other side were suffering privations of want. The time had come when this selfishness should cease, and when we should take steps to put ourselves on an equality with our fellows in other parts of the Empire.

He recalled the strong references made by Mr. Grimes last year, with reference to "Prussian methods," and so on when it was proposed to extend the term of Parliament, and remarked upon his sudden conversion to the idea of a further extension as well as the conversion of other members who had formerly spoken in the same way. He, Mr. Currie, had at one time thought it his duty to support a Coalition Government in the interests of the country; but he had yet to learn of one single action done by that Government for the last six months for the good of the country, or the help of the Regiment.

Members of the Coalition Government instead of stumping the country for recruits, stayed at home and occupied themselves with political deals. Consequently he had felt himself unable to adhere to the Government any longer; for it was not the choice of the people, who had had no voice in the matter. The House had to-day, one third of the seats vacant, and it had no right to take upon it the control of the country without the consent of its people. He thought that the war would have come to a decision before the end of the year, consequently there would be no need whatever to postpone an election. Elections had been held in Canada and Australia, and would be held here. He would oppose any scheme to extend the term of the Legislature.

He congratulated the Government on their bold stand with reference to Selective Conscription. He would not oppose such a measure which was the fairest and best way of securing recruits. He might, however, find it necessary to discuss or even oppose some details of the measure. On all matters pertaining to the war, the Government would have his hearty support.

He himself had left the Government on principle, and he felt far more comfortable on the Opposition side of the House, because he was now free to speak his mind fully on all matters which arose.

THE HON. THE PRIME MINISTER said that the Government were more comfortable than Mr. Currie was on the Opposition side of the House.

We were now at the crisis of the war, at the most difficult time of the war, and there was no time either for politics or for elections. For anything that had been done or left undone during the last six months, Mr. Currie had been equally responsible. What had he done for recruiting? What wrong had been done with the "Rutjenfel"? Nothing whatever.

He himself was proud of anything that had been done in connection with that ship. Mr. Currie said that he was not going to oppose Conscription. Was that the spirit in which to come into the House? He wanted people who would support it, not people who would not oppose it. He thanked the returned soldiers from the bottom of his heart for creating the wave of feeling that had made Conscription possible. But with Mr. Currie politics came first. This Parliament had met on a Win-the-War policy. They were going to get the men, to get the money, and to extend Parliament so as to have a free hand. Mr. Currie wanted to go to the country, and reap any little unpopularity that might be created against the Government, because they brought in conscription and enforced it. The Conscription bill was printed and ready; it would be given notice to-day, and passed within a few days, and the Government would extend the Parliament one year to give themselves a free hand in the enforcement of the Act.

The measure would deal with unmarried men between 18 and 40, who were divided into classes. Married men would include widowers, and men married after April 10th, because no one was going to escape by getting married. The men would be divided into classes according to age. The first class being from 18 to 25, and they would be called up in order of age by Proclamation, upon the issue of which they at once become soldiers, and subject to military law. The Act would afford claims to exemption on the ground of other members of the family having gone already; or on the ground of serious family responsibilities. The Judges of the Supreme Court had kindly consented to act as the members of the Exemption Tribunal, and they could sit alone or together; their decision would be final.

The Government intended to introduce a War Income Tax, so that those who did not pay under the War Profits Tax should do their share.

He did not care whether these bills were unpopular or not. If it were necessary to sink politically on account of these war measures, he was satisfied to do so. The situation was most critical, as he knew so long as he was in power. These measures would go through. This would be a War Session, a business session, and a short session, and a memorable session.

The Committee was appointed. THE PRIME MINISTER gave notice of bills to extend the Legislature, and to enforce Military Service and several other bills.

MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES gave notice of bills. Various papers were tabled and questions asked.

The House adjourned till to-morrow at 3 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24th.

The House met at 3 p.m., pursuant to adjournment. Various questions were asked and answered.

HON. THE PRIME MINISTER had leave to introduce the following bills:

- Extension of Present Legislation.
- Education Act (Amendment).
- Marine Conventions Act, 1911. (Introduction of)
- Patents (Amendment).
- Consolidated Statutes (Publication of).
- Crown Lands (Amendment).
- Shipping; Department of.

Which were read a first time. MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES had leave to introduce the Marine Disasters' Fund Act, and to deal with the reporting of missing schooners.

HON. THE PRIME MINISTER gave notice that to-morrow he would ask the House to hold a Secret Session, in order to hear a dispatch received from the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The House then adjourned till to-morrow at 3 p.m.

THURSDAY, APRIL 25th.

The House met at 3 p.m., pursuant to adjournment. The House sat in Secret Session until 3.35, when ordinary business was resumed.

It was moved and seconded that an Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor in reply to the Speech delivered by him to both Houses of the Legislature. MR. WALSH addressed the House upon this motion. He referred, first, in terms of eulogy to the brilliant career of the late Prime Minister, although he could not agree with the steps taken by him in connection with the retirement, and the advancement to of-

fice of the present Prime Minister, which he considered to be discreditable to all concerned. He, Mr. Walsh, was not prepared to subscribe to the leadership of Dr. Lloyd, and therefore he was sitting in Opposition. With reference to the Conscription measure, he thought that if some of the leaders of the present Government had adopted a more encouraging attitude towards the campaign for recruits in 1914, instead of saying that a few cases of lobbsters would be a sufficient contribution instead of men, there would be no need for Conscription. If the present Government were in any way representative of the people, or had any intention of going back to the country, then a conscription measure would receive the best of treatment at his hands. But this Government had no regard for their duty towards the soldiers; they had taken no care of the returned men; and that, in itself, had discouraged recruiting. He thought that the present recruiting campaign showed that there was no necessity for Conscription. He did not wish to make any pronouncement this afternoon for or against Conscription, because he had not yet seen the bill. With regard to the proposed extension of Parliament, he proposed to bring down some of the speeches made last year by members now on the Government side of the House, to show how their opinions had changed. Many of those on the Government side were promised permanent posts when the session was over, and it was unconstitutional for them to be sitting. He was prepared to stay here for six weeks, if necessary to oppose the extension. He thought also that the Prime Minister's proposed journey to England was quite unnecessary at present, and ought to be put off until later in the year.

MR. CURRIE gave notice of questions.

MR. WALSH gave notice of questions.

HON. THE PRIME MINISTER gave notice of two bills.

HON. THE PRIME MINISTER moved the second reading of the Military Service Bill. We were faced, he said, with very serious crisis, and there was only one thing to be done, to do our duty, and to pass the Bill. He said that he knew of certain things in connection with recruiting which Mr. Walsh had arranged to do, and which he had failed to do; but it was easy enough for him to tell other people what they should have done. He referred appreciatively, however, to the fine recruiting record of a Society at Placentia, where Mr. Walsh was President, and who had sent a large proportion of their members. Other places had done as well, some better; but why should these give their all while others gave little or nothing? The Bill was right in principle; and further, it was absolutely essential to keep up the Regiment and to keep us in the fight to the finish.

He proceeded to explain that the Bill would deal with all unmarried men between 19 and 40 years. Widowers without children or men married after April 10th, 1918, would be counted as unmarried, because where one or more brothers, according to the size of the family had already gone, exemption would be granted. The classes were: 19 to 24, 25 to 29, 30 to 34 and 34 to 40. These classes would be called up in order, or part of a class, the youngest first, might be called up as needed. Men engaged in work of national importance, or having persons mainly dependent upon them, such as parents, sisters, etc., might also be exempted either permanently or for a time. Upon the spirit, impartiality and fairness of the tribunal would depend the success of the Act, and for that reason he was very glad that the Judges of the Supreme Court had consented to act, because everyone had entire confidence in them.

The present war situation was critical, and would continue so for some time; and unless a continuous stream of reinforcements were forthcoming, those in command could not proceed as they would wish.

He felt that the Bill would be received in the spirit in which it was forwarded, and that it would be fairly enforced and recognized by the people as necessary.

MR. CURRIE admitted the principle and had no objection to the Bill. He would like the second reading held over till to-morrow, but would be willing to see the rules suspended after that and the Bill were rushed through. The Premier had interrupted him two days ago. He was and always had been a believer in conscription.

He did not believe that the Government had long had the system

of conscription in view. On the contrary, supporters of the Government had been speaking and writing against conscription within very recent times. The late Prime Minister had intended to adopt conscription last year but he had not had it. He, himself, cared just as little for any political injury as himself through conscription as did the Premier, and was willing to face his district on the question of conscription at any time.

He approved of the provision that no men under 19 were to be recruited. We had been taking recruits far too young hitherto. At the Premier's suggestion he accepted of this war. Voluntary recruiting was no longer adequate. He proceeded to give an account of its progress and ultimate failure. THE MINISTER OF MILITIA congratulated Mr. Speaker on his elevation. This session, he felt, was a very important session, a Win-the-War Session, and this was its most important measure, and one on which he thought every member of the House ought to state his views on this most important question. He himself, had advocated conscription throughout this war. Voluntary recruiting was no longer adequate. He proceeded to give an account of its progress and ultimate failure. THE NEEDS OF THE REGIMENT were urgent, and we wanted now, not 300 men, but 1,000. We wanted men, not only to fill the gaps but also to take the places of men who had been wounded again and again. If this country stood high to-day in the eyes of the world, it was through the blood of the boys who were at the front. The country must be aroused far more than it had ever been before. He spoke in high terms of the work of the returned soldiers in arousing public sentiment at this critical time. He felt that the intelligence, the loyalty and the true British spirit of the people of his district was such that they were behind him as one man in taking his present stand.

The Bill was read a second time. HON. THE PRIME MINISTER moved second reading of the Extension of the Legislature Bill. He said that the object of this was to give the Government a free hand in carrying out and enforcing the Conscription measure. They would do as much as possible immediately, before the fishery opened, then there would be a certain time before any large number could again be obtained. In the fall, however, the main bulk of the recruiting would be done, and men would be compelled to come up whether they wished or not. During the next few weeks he thought there would be a considerable amount of voluntary recruiting. There would be no time for politics or for ministers going away from St. John's in the autumn. The experience of last year had shown that the Government had found that all their time in the fall was taken up in assisting the trade to deal with the tonnage question. It would be the same with the Military Service Bill. The fighting of an election would interfere seriously with the enforcement of the Act. He regretted any misinterpretation on his part, of Mr. Currie's views yesterday, it arose from the rather cold and neutral terms in which Mr. Currie had referred to the Bill, which he had voted for this afternoon. The Government intended to get through the Military Service Bill, and to remain in power to carry it out.

MR. CURRIE said it was extraordinary that a Government should say they intended to remain in power for the purpose of enforcing the Military Service Bill. Why should they suppose that any Government which might replace them would not enforce the Act.

THE PREMIER—You have people associated with you who would not enforce the Act.

MR. CURRIE—If there are people associated with me who would not enforce the Act, I do not know who they are, and I for one, would not be associated with any such people. The Act ought to be put into full force at once; otherwise there would be discrimination because those who went to the fishery would escape while others would be conscripted.

THE PREMIER—Nothing of the sort.

MR. CURRIE—It was remarkable how much the opinions of Govt. members had changed from what they were in opposition. They were leaning now towards their principles for political expediency. It was only a week or two since they were preparing for an election, now they had changed their minds. If any election could be held in Canada and in Australia it would be held here. He opposed the second reading.

MR. COAKER hoped Mr. Currie was not associated with Mr. Walsh or Mr. Gibbs, who opposed Con-

scription, or at least, did not support it. The men who had wanted elections last fall, and this January and this May, were the F.P.U. men. If they did not want one now it was because they recognized that this year was the crisis of the Empire's fate, and they intended to see that the country did its duty. We had only been playing at war so far, we would have to suffer now. He challenged Mr. Currie to face him in Burin District, and see what the people thought about it.

The Bill was read a second time. The Marine Disasters Fund Bill was read a second time, also the Education Act amendment, the Inflammable Substance Act amendment in the Act to adopt the (Imperial) Maritime Conventions Act, the Patents Amendment Act and Dog Act amendment were read a second time, each being briefly explained by the Prime Minister.

The Legislative Council sent down the Daylight Bill, which was read a first time.

The House adjourned till to-morrow at 3 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 26th.

The House met at 3 p.m. pursuant to adjournment. Petitions were presented by Mr. Walsh, Mr. Grimes, Mr. Parsons, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, Mr. Jennings, Mr. Moore, the Premier, Mr. Coaker, Mr. Targget, Mr. Winsor.

The House went into Committee of the whole on the Military Service Bill.

MR. WALSH asked that the Committee stage be deferred until Monday.

THE PREMIER refused to defer the Bill. The Government intended to put the Bill through as soon as possible and to put out the proclamation before next week was out. He regretted that he could not comply with the request, because the matter was one of national urgency.

MR. WALSH repeated his objections to proceeding at once. The Committee proceeded nevertheless with the reading and passing of the Bill.

THE PREMIER in reply to Mr. Currie, said that it was the intention to put the Bill through as soon as possible and to put out the proclamation before next week was out. He regretted that he could not comply with the request, because the matter was one of national urgency.

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The Bill passed Committee with some trifling amendments, and was ordered to be read a third time to-morrow.

The Bill to extend the term of the Legislature also passed Committee without debate.

The Marine Disasters Fund amendment was partly passed and deferred. The Education Act amendment, the "Maritime Conventions Act" Bill, the Patent Law Amendment Bill also passed Committee.

The Dog Act Amendment and Daylight Bill were read a second time.

The House, on motion of the Premier adjourned till to-morrow, Saturday, at 3 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 27th.

The House met at 3 p.m., pursuant to adjournment. HON. MIN. OF FINANCE tabled the public accounts for the past year.

Petitions were presented by Mr. Parsons, Mr. Walsh, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, Mr. Grimes, MR. CURRIE gave notice of questions.

THE PREMIER had leave to introduce a Trade Control Bill, which was read a first time. Various questions were asked and answered.

The Military Service Bill was read a third time and sent to the Legislative Council. It was moved and seconded that the Parliament Extension Bill be read a third time.

MR. CURRIE said he saw no possible reason for this Bill, but he had been deprived of his opportunity to remark on it in Committee, and it was futile to do so on the third reading. The Government were in favor to-day without the consent of the people. There were vacancies in at least one-third of the seats. Extension of Parliament might be carried again and again in the same way indefinitely, and the Government were the same people who last year held up the proceedings of the House for three weeks while they threatened and abused the then Government for daring to pass a similar Bill, but now they were availing of the national