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E. E. B.

TEMPER

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JUDY.

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SYSTEM

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September 12, 1917

THE GRAIN GROWERS' GUIDE

(1467) 35

Our Ottawa Letter

The New Franchise Act—Military Service Board Busy—C.N.R. Bill in Senate
(By The Guide's Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, September 7.—The parliamentary week has closed amidst considerable excitement due to the introduction by the government of a war time elections act, which will disfranchise a large number of naturalized Canadians, more particularly in the western provinces. The bill was introduced yesterday by Hon. Arthur Meighen and today Liberal senators and members were in caucus to decide on the course they would adopt in regard to it. While no official announcement was forthcoming, it is generally understood that the slogan of the opposition will be to "fight the measure to the last ditch." Thus the prospects of an early prorogation of parliament have faded away and the outlook is for probably the most strenuous portion of a session unrivalled in length and interest.

It is understood that the opposition are practically a unit in regard to the bill and that some of its strongest opponents will be conscriptionist Liberals from the West, who voted for the military service act. They take the view that the government has to some extent broken faith with them because they risked their lives politically to support the measure of manhood conscription. The chief features of the War Election Act may be summarized as follows:

Disfranchisement of citizens of enemy alien birth, naturalized since March 31, 1902. Disfranchisement not to apply to those with sons, grandsons, or brothers on active service or to Armenians or Syrians. Disfranchisement of Dukobors, Mennonites and all others exempted from conscription military service for conscientious reasons; exercise of franchise by any individual a bar to any later claim from exemption on conscientious grounds. Enfranchisement of mothers, wives, widows, daughters or sisters of soldiers who have gone overseas from Canada since the beginning of the war, including such as have lost their lives at the front.

Adoption of provincial franchise subject to addition of the women entitled to vote and the subtraction of those who are disfranchised. Preparation of new lists in Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island by enumeration, according to methods now followed in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Existing lists in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to be accepted, with addition of women's votes to be made by the system of enumeration, adopted for the western provinces. Lists to be prepared by enumeration in unorganized districts. Parts one and two of voters' lists in cities and towns of over 5,000 population in Ontario to be adopted, with enumeration to provide for the addition of woman and manhood suffrage voters.

Military Service Board in Session

During the week preparations for the bringing into force of the Military Service Act have been advanced at the capital. The Military Service board is in daily session and it has been announced that the proclamation notifying the first class of conscripts will shortly be issued. In the commons to day on the motion of Sir George Foster, the board of selection named by the commons and the vote to choose half the members of the local tribunals which will hear applications for exemption, was appointed. It consists of 21 members, half of whom were nominated by Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

When the motion was made Sir Wilfrid Laurier expressed his deep regret that the government had thought it advisable to apply the conscription law before the people had a chance to pronounce upon it. "I think and my opinion is confirmed more and more

that it would have been in the interests of the country at large, if at least the people had been consulted before the law was applied. I must say frankly that if I had followed my first inclination I would not have given any countenance to any participation in the administration of the act. But on the whole I believe that it is always better to minimize the evil effect of a bad law by the wisest administration of it, so that efforts may be directed to making the application of it fair to all parties and to getting out of it the largest possible measure of justice compatible with its provisions." Sir Wilfrid added that he had endeavored to recommend men whose standing in the community would be a guarantee that so far as they were concerned the act would be applied with a determination to do justice to all.

"Might I ask the leader of the opposition," Sir Sam Hughes queried, "how he would explain the delay in enforcing this military service act? I doubt very much if, owing to the delay, there will be a soldier on the ground before the war is over or before peace is concluded. If the right hon. gentleman were returned to power, how would he provide for meeting this emergency?"

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, "If the soldiers are not to get to the front till the war is over, better consult the people at once."

C.N.R. Bill in the Senate

Considerable interest has centered in the debate in the senate on the Canadian Northern Bill. There was some nervousness on the part of the government as to its probable fate in the upper house, but this appears to have passed away and it is generally expected that when the division is taken early next week, on the second reading, it will be adopted by a small majority. Probably with the idea of removing some of the objections to the bill, Sir James Loughheed today, in reply to a question by Sir McKenzie Bowell made the announcement that the government will fix a maximum amount to be paid for the capital stock to be purchased. He said that the government would provide that the fixing of the amount shall not be taken into consideration by the arbitrators, as an element in fixing the value, if any, of the stock to be acquired. He also stated that the government will provide in the agreement that no obligation of the company, not disclosed to the arbitrators, shall, upon being established as valid claims, within a period to be fixed after the award is accepted, be paid out of the award.

Meighen Explains Franchise Bill

More than ordinary interest was centered in the speech of Hon. Arthur Meighen introducing the new franchise act already referred to as the War-Time Election Act. At the time of writing, no other speech had been made on the subject, but Sir Wilfrid Laurier will be heard tomorrow afternoon when the second reading is moved. After dwelling at some length on what he considered as the necessity for the measure which he said was necessary because of conditions arising out of the war, Mr. Meighen explained the details of the proposal as follows:

It is proposed that by a measure of woman enfranchisement, added strength shall be given to the voice of the soldier of Canada. Those of their nearest kin at home may be presumed to be most likely to re-echo the sentiments of their sons, husbands and brothers overseas and by this bill, the nearest female relatives of the men of our expeditionary forces who have left the shores of Canada, are given the right to vote. The wife or widow, the mothers, the daughters and the sisters of overseas soldiers are by this bill enfranchised.

"It will be remembered that earlier in the session, the prime minister intimated to parliament that in his judgment it would be proper to extend the franchise to the women of Canada, subject to such conditions and limitations as parliament might provide, and that whatever extension of the franchise was made in one province, should be

made to all. Under the abnormal circumstances precipitated by the present war, the measure of woman suffrage which I have just outlined, is deemed fitting and does indeed constitute in my judgement a reasonably general extension of the franchise to women. It will be obvious to all, that having regard to the fact that as all female immigrants to this country from Europe or from elsewhere have become naturalized by marriage or by the naturalization of a parent, and without entailing upon themselves any special oath or obligation, an unlimited admission of women to the franchise at this time

would be unfair and unreasonable. A line of limitation must therefore be found. The principal reason for adopting the line laid down by this bill is that it is the only means of extending to the soldiers living, dead or in chains, an adequate voice in the decision of a great electoral contest fraught with consequences peculiarly vital to themselves.

"War service should be the basis of war franchise. It has been our purpose to make this as far as possible, the central principle of the bill now introduced. It is true that war service

Continued on Page 36

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