



The
Soldiers' Vote Act
of
British Columbia

**Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper
Denounces Conspiracy to
Manipulate Votes**

**"The Sun" Analyzes Legis-
lation and Exposes Details
of the Plot**

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A PURE PATRIOT?

(The Sun, July 21, 1916)



"Soapy" Welsh (as he jumps over to England): "Not fear of investigation, but a yearning to keep the votes of our Canadian soldiers pure, prompts my leaving thus hurriedly."

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Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper
DENOUNCES
the B. C. Soldiers' Vote Act

The provisions of the Act are exceedingly unfair and place it in the power of anyone instructed to carry them out to abuse the trust for party purposes without fear of detection. All the safeguards provided in the Election Act are conspicuous by their absence. The circumstances under which Mr. Welsh has been appointed to assist in taking the vote are such as to show the intention of the Government was to abuse their power and manipulate this vote in their own interest by unfair means. It is all in line with the political character of the premier and of the German idea of success. In a word, instead of 'playing cricket' in the English sense, 'kultur' is adopted. Success justifies everything. The essence of 'kultur' consists in this: The man who cheats at cards is not a cheat if he is not found out."

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THE EXPLANATION

(The Sun, July 28, 1916)



W. J. Bowser (to Canadian officers): "Y'see, you're only Canadian gentlemen, so you can't be trusted on this job. It takes a cute guy, like my pal Welsh here, to take the soldiers' vote the way I want it taken."

W. J. BOWSER
C. B. ANDERSON

A FOUL PLOT UNCOVERED

(The Sun, Wednesday, July 19, 1916)

We made the statement yesterday that the Military Forces Voting Act under which our soldiers are to exercise their franchise could be proved to have been drafted expressly for the purpose of manipulation.

The only precedent in Canada quoted in support of its enactment is the "Canadian Soldiers on Active Service" Act adopted by the federal parliament in April, 1915. None of the other provinces passed soldiers' voting acts, although four provincial general elections—Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Nova Scotia—have taken place since the war began.

It is not only admitted but claimed that the federal legislation justified similar action here and that our act is modelled on that enacted at Ottawa.

A comparison of the sections of the two acts makes it clear that to a large extent the B. C. act was copied from the federal act. The routine clauses of the Ottawa act are reproduced word for word. It is only when the Ottawa act provides the usual safeguards to ensure an honest election, that the draftsman of the B. C. act leaves them entirely alone, so that they find no place in the Bowser measure.

The most essential feature of an election act is that it should make full provision for the appointment of scrutineers to represent both political parties at the polls. Under the Dominion act an ample corps of scrutineers is provided. The governor-in-council must appoint six scrutineers, three on the nomination of the prime minister and three on the nomination of the leader of the opposition. The six scrutineers are empowered to appoint as many deputies as they may deem necessary. One of

each nomination may be present at the distribution of ballot papers and envelopes, the marking of ballots, the closing of envelopes and the posting of the same, and all may exercise all the rights which may under the Dominion Elections Act be exercised by candidates or their representatives at any poll. The travelling and living expenses of all scrutineers for both parties are paid by the government, and they must be afforded facilities for the performance of their duties. This is as it should be.

It was with this federal legislation before him that Mr. Bowser drafted the Provincial Act. Let us see to what extent he was guided by it. The agent-general is empowered to appoint a presiding officer for the holding of a poll at each military camp or base or administration unit in the United Kingdom where soldiers are engaged in military duties. The presiding officer may appoint such deputies and other officers as may be necessary for the holding of the poll. These are McBride-Bowser appointees, not one of whom will be expected to safeguard Liberal interests.

The provision for the appointment of scrutineers is the most serious clause in the act. The lieutenant-governor-in-council may appoint two scrutineers for the United Kingdom, one upon the nomination of the premier and another on that of the leader of the opposition. Each of these scrutineers, or his deputy, may be present at the opening of the ballot boxes and counting of the ballots. No scrutineers are entitled to any remuneration from the treasury of the province.

The provision of the federal act that there may be an opposition

scrutineer at every poll is purposely omitted. There can be but one Liberal scrutineer for the United Kingdom and he can be present only at the final count of the votes.

The provision that a Liberal scrutineer may be present at the distribution of the ballots and envelopes is deliberately left out.

The provision that a Liberal scrutineer may be present to watch the marking of the ballots is carefully excluded.

The provision that a Liberal scrutineer may be on hand to oversee the closing of the envelopes and the posting of the same to the agent-general is studiously omitted.

The provision that there shall be scrutineers at every poll who may exercise all the rights which may be exercised under the Elections Act by candidates or their agents is excluded from the copy.

The government takes power to appoint an army of officers and deputy officers to take charge of the polls, agents who will be expected to do its bidding. They are to be paid out of the public chest. The two scrutineers for the United Kingdom receive no remuneration from the treasury of the province. Hundreds of Bowser officials will be well remunerated. The single Liberal nominee must pay his own way.

It will thus be seen that in drafting the Soldiers' Vote Act Mr. Bowser has purposely excluded all the safeguards and provisions contained in the federal act for ensuring an honest election. From the opening of the polls till the last ballot is cast every Liberal candidate, every Liberal agent, every possible Liberal scrutineer will be rigidly excluded from the polls. The entire proceedings are to be conducted by a myriad of Bowser appointees in absolute secrecy and no prying eye will be permitted at any stage of the game.

The results sought to be obtained are obvious. In supreme control of the vote is an agent-general drawing a princely salary, and enjoying palatial surroundings, which he owes to the Bowser government, and is no doubt anxious to retain. In actual command will be F. W. Welsh, who is charged with doubly corrupting an honest merchant, and who is being rushed to London with indecent haste, while the committee of investigation is still in session. This is the Welsh who insisted that Pendray should continue to retain an agent who could be relied upon to be "diplomatic" in his dealings with the school board. He is the Welsh who destroyed the J. L. Sullivan wireless telegrams and the Seattle letter, and whose name has been stricken from the Conservative list of candidates as unfit to go before the electors. With such a creature in charge of the administration of the most rascally legislation which has ever been placed on any statute book, what may we not expect?

It is because of the desperate seriousness of the situation that we do not hesitate to place it fully before the electors. In the name of patriotism a conspiracy has been hatched and an act put through the legislature for the purpose of robbing the electorate of its franchise by the manipulation of ballots in secret five thousand miles away. What can be done to prevent the accomplishment of this grossest of all outrages? Is there nothing for the electorate to do but tamely submit to this most indecent and criminal outrage against representative government and liberty itself? Mass meetings to protest against this crowning infamy should be called in every section of the province to make representations to the Dominion and imperial governments, and devise drastic means for putting an end to a foul plot.

War Department Opens Way to Take and Count Soldiers' Vote Same Day as B. C. Polling

(The Sun, Friday, July 21, 1916)

It has been arranged that the nominations of candidates under the Elections Act will take place on August 3 and elections on September 14, so that nominations and elections are six weeks apart. The provisions under the Military Forces Voting Act as to polling are quite different. Under the latter act the deputy provincial secretary must transmit by cable to the agent-general in London a list of the names of the candidates in the respective electoral districts, with their address and descriptions. The only time limitation as to voting is that it shall not continue later than the first day on which any poll is held in the province under the Provincial Elections Act, in other words, it must not continue later than September 14.

So far as the act is concerned, voting may begin on or about August 3, the day the agent-general receives the names of the candidates. We understand that the ballots have already been sent to London, so that the only delay will be that caused by printing the names of the candidates, which will not take long. If two or three days are required to complete the printing of the names on the ballots, there will still be nearly six weeks left for taking the vote for the election of candidates.

The counting of the vote, however, will not take place until a much later date, namely, not less than ten weeks nor more than eleven weeks after nomination day. This means that the results of the vote in the United Kingdom cannot be known until October 12 at the earliest, or October 26 at the latest, a month or more after the election results for the province have been made known.

All this is, of course, very ridiculous. If all the votes throughout the vast area of British Columbia can be taken and announced in a single day, it is absurd that six weeks should be required to take the vote in a small country like Great Britain, all parts of which are so easily accessible, and more absurd that an additional four or five weeks should be necessary to count the ballots and announce the results. It is not only unnecessary and ludicrous, but it would be intolerable to have to wait four or five weeks after British Columbia gives her decision, before the results in the United Kingdom are made known.

The reason for all the apparent absurdity lies in the fact that the act was drafted with the idea that the elections would not be confined to the United Kingdom, but would extend to the continent of Europe and remote parts of Africa. Mr. Bowser entertained the foolish idea that he would be allowed to send his emissaries with ballot boxes into Belgium, France, Italy and all other countries in Europe and Africa, where B. C. voters might be found. He was going to invade the trenches in Flanders and the hospital at Salonika, besides travelling in the wake of the armies in Mesopotamia and South Africa. All this nonsense was speedily knocked on the head by the War Department, and the vote now will not extend beyond the boundaries of the United Kingdom and various places in Canada and Bermuda. This being so, there is no longer any reason for prescribing long periods for taking the votes, and even longer periods for determining the results.

We can conceive of nothing more unsettling and demoralizing to our

soldiers in the United Kingdom than that they should be worried by canvassers and pestered by political agents for six weeks on end. The very suggestion is preposterous. Should two opposing sets of political agents be allowed to harry soldier voters for six weeks, the situation developed would be most scandalous. The expense would be terrific. The struggle for votes would be bound to produce deplorable results. The very idea of the thing is revolting to decency and common sense.

It should not be necessary to do more than call the attention of the Government to these glaring absurdities and anomalies in the Soldiers' Vote Act, to lead to a complete revision of its terms without delay. The six weeks elapsing between nomination and election, under the Provincial Elections Act, afford ample time for locating the British Columbia

vote, distributing ballot boxes, ballots and all the necessary paraphernalia. For taking the vote not more than one day is necessary and election day here and in the United Kingdom should be the same, namely September 14. This will reduce the interference with military arrangements to the minimum, lessen the expense, rid the camps and hospitals of unwelcome interfering civilians and save British Columbia from being regarded as an unmitigated nuisance. Under section 17 of the act, power is conferred on the lieutenant-governor-in-council to make any regulations not inconsistent with the spirit of the act which may be deemed necessary, advisable or convenient. All the changes we urge are not only advisable and convenient, but absolutely necessary if this province is to retain any reputation for common sense and ordinary decency.

THE SOLDIERS' VOTE ACT

(The Sun, Wednesday, July 26, 1916)

As we pointed out before, a comparison of the Soldiers' Vote Act of this province with the federal Act of 1915 must be unobjectionable from a Conservative point of view as the federal Act is the product of a Conservative administration.

Under the federal Act the conduct of the elections in the United Kingdom is placed in the hands of the secretary of the High Commissioner of Canada, Mr. W. L. Griffith, a Liberal in politics. Under the Bowser Act the entire election management is entrusted to Sir Richard McBride, recently appointed to his position by Mr. Bowser himself as part of a conspiracy to divide the two most lucrative and honorable positions in the gift of the people between themselves, to which the acquiescence of the Hon. Mr. Turner was secured by a liberal allowance of hush money.

Under the federal Act the secretary of the High Commissioner is required to send the ballot papers and envelopes to the chief paymaster of the Canadian forces, who must distribute them to the several regimental paymasters, by whom they are sent to the officers commanding squadrons, companies and batteries, etc. By these officers ballot papers are supplied to the volunteers under their command who shall take the necessary affidavit of qualification.

Under the Bowser Act Sir Richard McBride is empowered to appoint a presiding officer for each poll, and each presiding officer may appoint as many deputies and other officers as he likes. For holding military polls in Canada, within or without the province, and in Bermuda, the lieutenant-governor-in-council is empowered to appoint the presiding officer, who

may appoint deputies and other officers as he sees fit. The Bowser Act ignores the paymaster of the Canadian forces, the regimental paymasters and commanding officers, and the whole military organization. The federal Act surrounds the election proceedings with the safeguards of military precision and discipline and its proper administration is guaranteed at every point by a Canadian officer's honor. The Bowser Act throws the whole conduct of the elections into the hands of partisan appointees to be selected by Sir Richard McBride or Mr. Bowser. What this means has been amply evidenced by the first prime selection, that of Mr. F. W. Welsh, snatched from a serious investigation as a brand from the burning.

Under the federal Act the volunteer is entitled to vote in the electoral district in which he last resided for thirty days, with the important proviso that if at the time he enlisted he was qualified to vote in any other electoral district he shall vote in that district only.

Under the Bowser Act he may vote in the electoral district in which he was last resident for thirty days without the proviso. He need not vote on the list on which he was enrolled as an elector. A thirty days' residence somewhere is the only determining factor. The check afforded by the election lists is entirely done away with. Thirty days' residence in an electoral district may be construed to mean thirty days under canvas in Vancouver, Victoria, Vernon, Sidney or Anyox, or thirty days' residence in the volunteer's home district, according as Mr. Bowser with the able assistance of Mr. Welsh and his horde of partisan deputies and officials choose to construe the Act. They can throw the vote as they like.

Under the federal Act scrutineers for all parties interested may be present at the distribution of ballot papers and envelopes, the making of affidavits, the marking of ballots, the closing of envelopes and the posting of the same, and may exercise all the rights which may under the Domin-

ion Elections Act be exercised by candidates or their representatives at any poll. At every stage of the proceedings from the opening of the ballot boxes till the final count a complete scrutiny is provided for.

Under the Bowser Act candidates, agents and scrutineers are excluded from every poll. Only one scrutineer for the United Kingdom is allowed for all the opposition candidates, and he is permitted to appoint one deputy, but they are excluded at every stage except "on the opening of bags and receptacles" and "the counting of the ballots." They are permitted to oversee the results of the six weeks' secret effort of Mr. Welsh and his corps of partisan colleagues. They are allowed to inspect the ruins after the house is burned.

Under the federal Act each commanding officer is empowered to take the votes of the men under his command, which will be done at the camp where his company or unit is stationed.

Under the Bowser Act Mr. Welsh and his assistants are required to give notice of the time and place of holding a poll, but it can be held anywhere. Only in Canada or Bermuda must the poll be held at each military camp or base. Under this provision full opportunity is afforded for every species of skulduggery owing to the absence of military surveillance. Operators of the Frank Slavin ex-prize fighter type should be of great assistance to Mr. Welsh.

Under the federal Act all scrutineers for all parties are paid out of the Dominion treasury.

Under the Bowser Act it is especially provided that no scrutineer shall be paid. The one representative for the opposition in the United Kingdom must go there and remain the rest of the summer at his own expense, or stay away.

Mr. Bowser has complained that it is an insult to state that his Act has been drawn for the purpose of facilitating manipulation of the soldiers' votes. Why, then, have all the safeguards provided by Sir Robert Borden and his government been carefully

and deliberately omitted from the Act? Why has the control of the elections been taken out of the hands of commanding officers who could not depart from the straight line of rectitude without incurring disgrace and dismissal from the service, and given over entirely to Welsh and his gang of kindred spirits—Welsh, who has torn up letters and telegrams of serious importance; Welsh, whose connection with recent election crooked work is not above suspicion; Welsh, who as a school trustee has acted as a tout for the Conservative association; Welsh, who sells places on the patronage list; Welsh, who has recently used his position on the school board to extort money from merchants who are tenderers for supplies to the board; Welsh, whose name had to be scored from the Con-

servative ticket in order that it might be deodorized?

Why has Mr. Bowser departed from the federal Act and deprived the opposition of agents and scrutineers, if it were not that dirty work might be done in the dark? Why has he left out every sane provision in the federal Act intended to ensure purity of elections? It will not suffice for Mr. Bowser to assume an injured air and whine that to suggest manipulation is to "insult" him. There can be nothing clearer in the world than that manipulation is the sole object he has in view. The Act proves it. Its provisions demonstrate it. Its omissions make it clear beyond all possible doubt. If to state these things is to insult Mr. Bowser, we state them, nevertheless, and every intelligent elector will agree with us.

CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE SOLDIERS

(The Sun, Monday, July 31, 1916).

Mr. Bowser informs the World: "That the government is giving every attention to the requests from the Prohibitionists regarding suggested changes in the procedure for safeguarding the soldiers' vote on the prohibition referendum was the assurance given by Premier Bowser to a World reporter this morning.

"The whole intent, he said, was to give the soldiers all the privileges of the voting as we would have it in British Columbia both on the referendums and the candidates and under just as rigid safeguards."

Coupling this statement with the editorial remark of the morning Bowser organ that it is not yet too late to make needed changes, there is some hope that the lieutenant-governor-in-council may yet adopt regulations amending the Act as provided

in section 17. The Sun's complete exposure of the conspiracy to manipulate the soldiers' vote may therefore not be ineffectual. We will not cease to scrutinize the amendments, however. Mr. Bowser has demonstrated how carefully he needs watching.

If the whole intent was to apply "just as rigid safeguards" to the soldiers' vote as the law provides for a general election, it is strange that the safeguards are left out of the Act. It is even more strange that while pretending to base the provincial Act on the federal Soldiers' Voting Act, Mr. Bowser has copied the latter slavishly until it comes to a question of safeguards, when he has found it convenient to skip them entirely.

If Mr. Bowser is at last driven to

provide rigid safeguards as in a provincial general election, he will have to exercise the powers of amendment allowed by section 17 in wholesale fashion.

Under the Provincial Elections Act elaborate machinery is provided for preparing voters' lists, which must be revised by a court of revision, the decision of which tribunal can in turn be appealed from. No one can vote unless he is duly registered as an elector. The right to vote does not exist unless the name of the voter is on the lists.

Under Mr. Bowser's Soldiers' Vote Act voters' lists are not even consulted and have no status.

Under the Provincial Elections Act the returning officer proclaims nomination day eight days in advance, and in the same proclamation fixes the date of election two weeks later. All polls in a district must be held on the same day. If a mistake is made in the proclamation, a fortnight's notice of a new election day must be given.

Under the Soldiers' Voting Act the agent-general must give notice of a day "not later than" the date fixed for the elections in the province (Sept. 14) when he will begin to receive votes. As nomination day is August 3, the soldiers' voting may therefore begin on August 4 and continue to September 14. No length of notice is prescribed. It may be ten minutes or ten days, just as Mr. Welsh thinks will suit the exigencies of the case.

Under the Provincial Elections Act the returning officer appoints an elections clerk, who takes a prescribed oath. Similarly he or his deputy appoints a poll clerk who takes a prescribed oath. Persons objected to must take an oath. The deputy returning officer must swear anyone he suspects of fraud.

Under the recent Bowser Act presiding officers and their deputies must be sworn to faithfully perform their duties, but none of the "other officers" to be appointed under section 4 need be sworn. There is no provision for objecting to a voter, no

matter what reason might be assigned for opposing his vote.

Under the Provincial Elections Act electors retire to curtained off compartments in polling booths and mark their ballots where they can be safe from observation. Under the Bowser Act no such secrecy is afforded.

Under the Provincial Act ballots must be printed in books, with numbers corresponding or ballots and counterfoils, and must be officially initialed before they can be used.

Under Mr. Bowser's new Act none of these precautions are necessary.

Under the Provincial Elections Act (sections 70-4) any person authorized in writing may act as agent of a candidate during all stages of an election. In the absence of an agent for an absent candidate, any elector may at any time during the election declare himself agent and act as such.

Under Mr. Bowser's Act by which he says he intended to provide the same "rigid safeguards" there is no provision for an agent or scrutineer of any kind until all the voting has been completed and Sir Richard McBride (with the assistance of Mr. Welsh) begins to count up the results of the vote.

Under the Provincial Elections Act all ballots and documents in connection with the election must be carefully preserved so that they can be examined on election petitions, returns, election trials, or prosecutions under the Elections Act.

The Bowser legislation provides this remarkable "safeguard," that if any bag or receptacle of ballots "appears to have been opened," the bag or receptacle "shall not be opened or the contents thereof examined." Such bags or receptacles, in fact, must never be opened, but "when the other papers are destroyed the whole of such unopened bags, receptacles and envelopes shall be destroyed unopened." This provision obviously opens the door to unlimited fraud. Any bag of ballots which may be considered unfavorable to the government has only to "appear to have been opened," in order that it may never be opened, and its contents will

forever remain concealed from courts of enquiry under any and every form of election trial. Another section is probably considered by Mr. Bowser to be a very rigid safeguard. It is perhaps one of the most curious in a very remarkable Act. If packages of ballots previously counted before the agent-general or the returning officer disappear, election courts must accept as conclusive evidence the written memorandum made by one of these gentlemen at the time he counted the ballots.

In a series of articles we have

carefully compared the Soldiers' Voting Act with the Federal Act from which it was copied in part, and with the Provincial Elections Act. It is impossible to account for its many sins of omission and commission except on the theory that it was drawn expressly to facilitate the manipulation of votes. The appointment of Mr. Welsh under the circumstances was all that was necessary to complete the details of an impudent and dangerous conspiracy against the rights and liberties of the electorate under representative government.