

Tories Will Disfranchise Over Two Million People

Government's Idea is to Steal as Many Votes as Possible From the Liberals-- Will the Women of Canada Sit Still Under the Odium Cast Upon Them-- The Franchise Bill Regarded by Liberals as an Outrage on Democracy.

(By H. F. Gadsby)

Ottawa, Sept. 15.—The party of "good sports" is now engaged in rail-roading through Parliament—under closure—a War Time Election Act which, under one guise or another, proposes to disfranchise over two million people. The underlying idea is to increase the Borden Government's chance of winning by stealing as many votes as possible from the Liberals.

The War Time Elections Act, which should really be called an act to Promote Annexation Sentiment in the Dominion of Canada, disfranchises in two ways—directly and indirectly. It is most dangerous when it disfranchises indirectly. Its direction consists in letting a hand-picked minority in and leaving an overwhelming majority out. To be explicit, there are perhaps two million women voters in Canada who would be entitled to cast a ballot at the next general election, if they were admitted to the franchise. The War Time Election Act chooses, out of these two million possibilities, about half a million soldiers' wives, widows, mothers, sisters, and daughters, but bars the door to the other million and a half women who have not had the bitter joy of sending their menfolk to the war, but who have been doing their bit just the same, helping the Red Cross, collecting funds and one way or another assuming their share of the burden of war.

Women Shut Out

The War Time Elections Act—such are the cold figures—enfranchises half a million women but leaves a million and a half out. When one comes to compare the half million women who are taken in with the million and a half women who are deliberately left out, one is constrained to admit that the patriotism, loyalty, zeal for the war and moral character of the three quarters who are left out is at least equal to that of the one quarter who are taken in. One surmises that a popular amendment to the bill would be to give every adult woman in Canada the vote on the same terms as the men. If this is not done, about one million and a half good wholesome Canadian women will rest under the imputation that they were not

loyal enough to be trusted with the vote in war time. Will they sit still under this odium?

It is true that many of these women who are excluded would vote Liberal, but a Government, as conscious of right as the Borden Government says it ought not to fear anything like that. Being "good sports" all they ought to ask is fair play. The women of Canada will be able to decide whether a War Time Election Act that leaves a million and a half women out and takes half a million in, is fair play or not.

Liberals Disgusted

The bill to disfranchise a million and a half Canadian women meets with nothing but disgust and indignation from all the Liberals. On conscription there were honest differences of opinion in the Liberal party in the House of Commons, but on this iniquitous curtailment of liberty there is no difference at all. With one or two exceptions the Opposition is agreed that the bill is essentially vicious and an outrage on our democracy. As one member put it, "Freedom under the Borden Government, broadens down from precedent to precedent until it shrinks to Arthur Meighen's size." And there is much truth in the paradox.

Union Government

When conscription looked like an issue, and union government was in the air, certain Liberals were asked to join company with the Borden Government. They are one and all rejoicing now that they did not throw in their lot with the tempter and associate themselves with people who could cook up such infamous legislation. They are also glad, as manly men, that they didn't tie up with the combination which is now trying to hide behind half a million women's skirts.

The chances are, too, that the half million women will disappoint them. Most of them are of the class who are deeply affected by the high cost of living which is primarily due to the Borden Government's alliance with food profiteers like Sir Joseph Flavelle. They will hardly vote for the Government that grants them a separation allowance only to hand it over to

the cold storage pirates who are waiting to younce upon it.

Breach of Faith

Having disfranchised a million and a half women, simply by not mentioning them, the War Time Election Act next proceeds to disfranchise about fifty thousand presumably loyal male citizens for the sole reason that they are of foreign birth. The clauses which exclude naturalized aliens of fifteen years standing as British subjects is not only a direct assault on our free institutions, but also a gross breach of faith.

These men came to this country under promise that they would have rights here which were denied them in their native land—and the chief right of all was the right to vote, to exercise a citizen's duty in electing a responsible government. Another thing, these men came to Canada for, was to escape the curse of war which has hung over Europe for centuries. They thought that Canada, guarded on three sides by the inviolable sea, and on the fourth by the greatest democracy in the world, would be free of it. Moreover, they did us the compliment to choose Canada in preference to the better advertised virtues of the United States, because no doubt they considered British institutions more stable than American ones, and life and property safer under the Union Jack than under the tSar Spangled Banner.

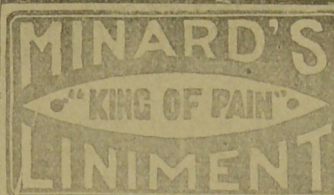
Opposed to War

All these years they have been law abiding citizens of the country which they sought as a refuge. Their views on war did not change when they changed their skies. The hate and fear of it was in their blood, put there by the horrors of a thousand years. And now because they still hate war, their constitutional rights are to be taken away. On the pretext that they are not to be trusted, they are deprived of their votes but are still allowed to pay the taxes which make the continuation of the war possible.

That they are disloyal, because they are not keen on war, is not a final statement. Many of their sons have enlisted and are fighting for freedom, Canada and the British Empire. There are many Galicians in the ranks. Many Canadian citizens with German names offered, and many were refused. Many who succeeded in enlisting were sent back when they got to England. The enemy-aliens, so-called, were at least as eager to do their duty as the native born Canadians.

The American Method

It is a safe guess that any enemy-alien who is bad enough not to be allowed to vote is bad enough to be interned. Nobody would object to a Franchise Act which would exclude



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It is said on good authority that the ex-Czar of Russia still has on deposit in the Bank of England \$35,000,000, placed there years ago in provision for the rainy day which now has come.

interned aliens or such as refuse to take oath of allegiance when asked. To go further than that is to trespass on our charter of freedom. Uncle Sam who has experience with all sorts of aliens for a hundred and forty years back, has never dealt with them by taking away their votes. His belief is that the cure for democracy is more democracy, but the Borden Government thinks the other way about. Its idea of rule is the horsewhip.

After the war is over Uncle Sam will be able to say, "I took away nobody's vote." Canada will have to say, "I did, but it was because Sir Robert Borden wanted to win an election." The new friend from Europe, hesitating between Canada and the United States will say, "Me for the United States where my vote is safe."

The War Time Election is fraught with apprehensions for the immigrant from Europe. He will naturally say, "If they take away my vote, they may take away my property next." And indeed, what's to prevent? A Government that will do the one would hardly stick at the other.

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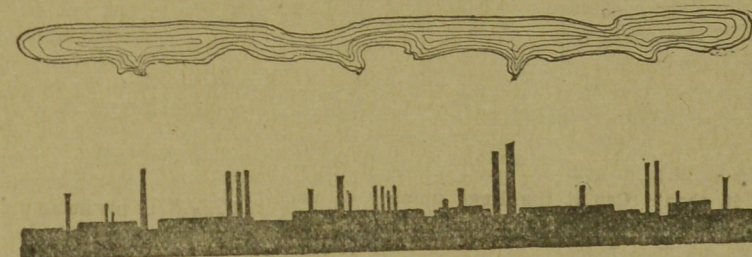
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