

REFERENDUM BILL

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Stultifying The House.

ty. (laughter). This Barceide is a demonstration of anxiety; at what it is?

DR. MCMILLAN: You are very anxious to show the teachers that you are doing something?

DR. MCMILLAN: Sure; and we intend to do something.

DR. MCMILLAN: What do the teachers want?

DR. MCMILLAN: An increase in salaries.

DR. MCMILLAN: Do you want to do that?

DR. MCMILLAN: Well, it must be done before they can get it.

DR. MCMILLAN: Why don't you put it in the ballot?

DR. MCMILLAN: How do you know they will?

DR. MCMILLAN: That is what we want to know, what the ballot is for.

DR. MCMILLAN: I have been endeavoring to tell you.

DR. MCMILLAN: You have been endeavoring to tell us that this ballot may be on anything.

DR. MCMILLAN: Of importance on anything.

DR. MCMILLAN: I thought you might be of importance on anything.

DR. MCMILLAN: We will limit that questions regarding Education.

DR. MCMILLAN: Why don't you put that in, anyway?

DR. MCMILLAN: The only question you want to submit to the people is whether they are prepared to pay the teachers more than they are at present, by direct taxation.

DR. MCMILLAN: You don't put that in the ballot.

DR. MCMILLAN: Why are you asking me a question and telling me that at the same time?

DR. MCMILLAN: I am saying that is the only really vital question submitted to the people.

DR. MCMILLAN: That is your opinion.

DR. MCMILLAN: And it is the only thing that is going to help the people, and it is the recommendation of this Commission?

DR. MCMILLAN: We understand.

DR. MCMILLAN: Yes, and we understand that it is going to come out of the people, and the object of the bill is to ask the people if they are going to increase the teachers' salaries by paying this money themselves.

DR. MCMILLAN: Yes, that is one of the things the people want to know.

DR. MCMILLAN: Then put it in the ballot. You have admitted now one question is to be. The point is how much are you going to ask the people of this Province to pay?

DR. MCMILLAN: Do you propose to increase salaries?

DR. MCMILLAN: There is the gist of the whole thing. We are not objecting to an increase in salaries to the teachers; now are the people going to vote?

DR. MCMILLAN: Unless you prepare them the question? They will come to members of the Legislature and say, "What does this mean?" "Oh, well, all have to say, 'this is just a question on anything; any question that the Governor-in-Council may deem fit to ask.' How is that going to help the teachers' salaries? Why not be definite? Why not prepare a bill as it was prepared in 1917?"

DR. MCMILLAN: Wasn't it definite enough, wasn't it? I included all the legislation that was proposed, and it provided that it should not go into operation until the people approved. But this Act by a gesture, it is only intended to show how anxious the Government is to do something for the teachers. Well, if they are anxious to do something for the teachers, let us see what they want done, don't say it will be a ballot on anything.

DR. MCMILLAN: My hon. friend is lecturing this House, telling us what we should do.

DR. MCMILLAN: You need to be lectured.

DR. MCMILLAN: He is not satisfied with addressing this Chamber five hours at a time, but in coming he must lecture the Government on that they should do and they should do it. Let me tell you that the very report of the Commission, that he is lecturing us on, contains the schedule of salaries and the ballot will be to give the people an opportunity of voting on that schedule. That is one part of it. But there is another recommendation that may be submitted by the Commission, and that is to give us power to submit the necessary legislation, anything we may wish to submit, at any time that we are ready.

HON. MR. STEWART: We are getting along, although I am sorry my hon. friend should give us this petulance. He is now beginning to take the attitude he should have taken at the beginning. I submit that this House should not be stultified by being asked to pass this bill on the inadequate information which is given on the face of it. That is my opinion; and as one member of this Committee I would prefer not to sit here at all when they pass legislation in that way. Are we to be driven blindfolded, like cattle, into passing legislation without knowing what we are passing? And when a member of this Committee hazards a statement with regard to the bill, is he to be told, "How do you know that?" Is that the attitude—

HON. MR. STEWART: Well, he was telling me something. That is the attitude—

HON. MR. STEWART: He was suggesting something. That is the attitude—

HON. MR. STEWART: Not at all. He was saying he knew.

HON. MR. STEWART: Please don't interrupt. That is the attitude that is being taken; and I still persist in my opinion that the proper method to deal with this question—when he has stated already that it is intended to be dealt with at an election that will take place a year and a half from now—would be to leave it over until the next session of the Legislature. That would be very much more in line with the recommendations of the Commission, for I would give the time and opportunity to explain the matter thoroughly to our people throughout the Province, just as the Commission suggested. At present we who are the representatives of the people do not know what is in the mind of the Government. If they have not made up their minds, they could take a year to consider it, and we would not be any worse off a year hence, since the bill cannot come into effect, in any case, before that time. If they do know what they intend to do, the whole House should know. That is the attitude I take. I say that this legislation is not definite. It is improper and it is premature.

DR. MCMILLAN: I just want to tell the promoter of this bill that when I have anything to say I am going to say it. If he thinks I am lecturing this House, I want to tell him that that is a privilege which does not belong to him entirely. He need not think he is the only lecturer in the House. (Applause.) I have already forced two admissions from him about this ballot. One was that it shall be a ballot in regard to taxation, and the second was that it shall be a ballot in the form of a schedule presented in the report of the Educational Commission. Now there are two different forms of schedule in the report, one presented by the Commission, one by the teachers. He says it is just in keeping with the recommendations of this Commission. Here is what the Commission says:

"An increase in subsidy may provide in whole or in part the necessary revenue for educational improvements, advances in salaries, pensions, etc., and we recommend that if, and when, an increased subsidy is granted the requirements of education be given first consideration by the Government. Should there be no increase in subsidy, however, the cost of improved education must be borne by the people. Before the submission of any plan of revenue to the people, every possible means should be taken by the Board of Education to inform the people of the conditions and of the real meaning of any suggested financial arrangement. We recommend the holding in every school district of educational meetings, at which officials of the Department, Supervisors, and others in the district could stimulate a deeper interest in the whole question. We are convinced that with adequate information and a true realization of the seriousness of the situation the problems will be approached with generous sympathy and practical results."

The Logical Method

Now, Mr. Chairman, I submit that if this Act were drawn up like the Act of 1917, you could begin that educational campaign in each district because you would have something to discuss. But this Barceide Act contains nothing, and when you go to the school districts you cannot discuss anything with them. You are passing an act which goes to the country meaning nothing, except that when the provincial general election comes around there shall be a ballot. Is that the time to hold educational meetings? It will require some effort, I think, to enable the people to see their duty in this respect. We can go back to that Commission that the Premier made reference to, of 1917, where he thought he found something "on" the leader of the Opposition and myself. That

is all right, and I shall deal with that on another occasion. There are some very valuable suggestions in that report of 1917; they will stand repetition and they are just as true today as they were at that time. I am not "lecturing" the promoter, I am merely suggesting that he give us something tangible to work on. We are just as much interested in this question of increasing the teachers' salaries as the Government is, and we would like to help this matter along. But give us something to work on. We will be meeting the farmers and representatives of the country districts from now until the election. Will you give us the opportunity of trying to tell them that they should do more for Education? (Applause.) We cannot do it when there is nothing to tell, when we do not know what the Government has in mind. All we can do is to tell them on election day, and that it will have something to do with education.

MR. W. H. DENNIS: I think the members of the Opposition are a little unreasonable in regard to this matter. The Government is taking the responsibility of submitting a referendum, and they will receive the chastisement they deserve if they err. The promoter has been frank in explaining that he does not, at the present time, know what is going to be placed on that referendum. I don't suppose the leader of the Opposition is prepared to submit to the promoter of the bill everything that should go in that ballot. Is it wonderful that the Government should take this twelve months to ascertain from the people what they think should be done? So far as educating the people is concerned, I think all of us could go ahead and explain that the teachers must receive more money, and if we are not fortunate in getting our claims from Ottawa there is no other alternative but that money must be raised from the tax-payers. I think we should go ahead with this bill.

HON. MR. STEWART: My hon. friend is not very consistent. He says that nobody in this House knows the form of the ballot and no one has given it any consideration. He challenged the Opposition to suggest anything and then he said "We should go on with the bill." Is there any reason why it should not stand over for a year, until we can discuss it intelligently? Why should we rush it through now? It is not suggested that this ballot will be required before the next election, in 1931; so why rush it through? My hon. friend says that the Government is prepared to take the responsibility and that we should not say anything. We too have a responsibility as members of this House, and we are prepared to take our responsibility; but we want to take it intelligently. I suppose the member from O'Leary would want to take his responsibility intelligently. I don't suppose he would want to meet the people of his district without the knowledge that he confesses he lacks at the present time.

Exceeding Recommendations

The promoter says he wants to follow the recommendations of the Commission. I may tell him he is going beyond those recommendations because he says that one of the things that will probably be submitted in the referendum is whether the people will approve of the higher salaries given in the schedule. The Commission does not recommend that; the only question the Commission recommends to a referendum is whether the people will submit to taxation. The rest is a matter for the Government. Does my hon. friend suggest that the Government will take no responsibility at all?

HON. MR. LEA: Isn't that a democratic Government?

HON. MR. STEWART: Is that your idea of democracy?

HON. MR. LEA: Are you proposing that we shouldn't wish to carry out the wishes of the people?

HON. MR. STEWART: I am not saying anything of the kind. You need not try to quibble my hon. friend. (Applause.)

HON. MR. LEA: What is the meaning of your remark, then?

HON. MR. STEWART: I believe in democracy according to the form of Government as we have it in every part of the British Empire. And that form of Government does not provide for government by referendum. (Applause.) That is what I am talking about, and my hon. friend knows it. I am just as much a friend of democracy as he is; but I am pointing out that he is proposing to go beyond the recommendations of his own Commission. The referendum suggested by the Commission was simply on the question, whether or not the people should tax themselves for the purposes of Education. If the Government is so despondent of having the recommendations followed explicitly, that is all they have to do with regard to the referendum. As I said before, this matter certainly should be left until the

next session of the House. There is not any sensible reason why it should be passed at this session, in this hurried way, without any one on either side of the House having any knowledge of what is going on.

MR. ARSENAULT: I was amused at my hon. friend from O'Leary when he said that the teachers should receive more money. Last year he was very particular to ask his electors what ideas they had on this matter; and he was right. He gave notice in the press. He said the teachers were looking for increased salaries, which, if granted, would mean \$100,000. "Are you willing to give them that increase?" he asked—adding "You farmers are now paying \$74,000 taxes on your land." (Laughter.) That is the important question; to tell the people they are now paying so much in taxes, and that so much more is wanted from them, leaving it for them to decide whether they will pay it or not. That is what my hon. friend from O'Leary asked his district last year; and I would not think that he would now want to ask any question that is not definite.

Full Information Demanded

MR. W. C. S. MCLURE: When some information was asked with respect to this clause in the bill, the promoter gave the answer that we receive very often in this House: "I don't know." Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not prepared to accept that answer, because after some discussion on this clause we have received some information, and I believe the promoter does know and should give this House the information with regard to it. He has already admitted that this referendum will be with regard to increased taxation for educational purposes. That is a certain amount of information, and it is different from the first answer we received. I think the promoter should take all the members of the House into his confidence and tell us what he really knows with regard to the questions that will be placed on this ballot. We will not commit him to every detail, but let him be frank. He told us he knew nothing of it; now he has given us a little information, but we consider that we are entitled to a little more.

HON. MR. LEA: I didn't say I knew nothing of it. I said I didn't know what we might need to put on it.

MR. MCLURE: I don't think that was your answer.

HON. MR. STEWART: There has been shown a very great reliance on the part of my hon. friend the promoter. He has not been candid and straightforward in this matter, which is regrettable; for if he had told this House what he had in mind it might have saved a considerable amount of time.

HON. MR. LEA: Does my hon. friend think I am hiding something that we have agreed on as a Government?

HON. MR. STEWART: Very well. I shall take my hon. friend's word for that.

HON. MR. LEA: That is a fact. We only received this report when the House was practically in session.

HON. MR. STEWART: Then I will take his word for it that he does not know, and the Government does not know. But why not leave this measure until they have had an opportunity of discussing it and coming to a decision? Is there any valid reason why it should not stand until the next session, when the Government will be prepared to come before this Legislature with a considered opinion?

HON. MR. LEA: Well, I will say to my hon. friend that we are endeavoring as quickly as we can to bring into force all the recommendations of the Commission; and one of them was in regard to the taking of this ballot. How does he know that the Government might not appeal to the people in the coming year? And for the sake of giving the teachers their increase as quickly as possible, would it not be better to have this legislation on the statutes?

HON. MR. STEWART: Now my hon. friend is taking the same recalcitrant attitude that he adopted at first. Does he mean to say that that has been contemplated—an election this year?

HON. MR. LEA: No, no! (Laughter.) But how does he know that it might not be necessary?

HON. MR. STEWART: Why bring out that silly excuse? (Applause.)

HON. MR. LEA: I am only saying that that is one valid reason. We are endeavoring to assist the teachers as quickly as we can; and suppose that that became necessary? Now you are giving the Government the power to submit this by ballot. Is the Opposition now going to block or endeavor to block the opportunity of the teachers getting their salaries increased one year earlier? (Loud applause from the Hon. Mr. LePage.)

HON. MR. STEWART: My hon. friend has made a statement that is

not justified and that is unworthy of him. He says: "If this thing should happen." I asked him if they had contemplated it, and he said No. What possibility or set of circumstances could arise between now and the next session of the Legislature that he does not have present knowledge of? I cannot conceive of any. But take that possibility as balanced against the importance of having this bill put through in proper form, so that it can be discussed intelligently, and what is the argument worth? (Applause.) My hon. friend has made a statement that savors of political propaganda when he says that we are trying to block what is in the interests of the teachers. We are just as fully identified with the teachers, as citizens, as he is. If he can show me that the teachers are going to get any earlier assistance by putting this bill through, I will not discuss it further.

HON. MR. LEA: Well, I have shown you where it might.

HON. MR. STEWART: You haven't shown me anything of the kind. (Applause.) You have shown no reason why it should not stand over for another session. Is it putting this bill through, or is it the referendum, that is going to benefit the teachers?

HON. MR. LEA: That is what we are in committee for, to get ourselves the power to take the referendum.

HON. MR. STEWART: If my hon. friend could say he was going to take this referendum before another year and a half—

HON. MR. LEA: It is possible.

HON. MR. STEWART: It is not possible that you are going to take it apart from the general election.

HON. MR. LEA: No, but the general election is possible.

HON. MR. STEWART: It is a very remote possibility.

HON. MR. LEA: It might not be so remote.

HON. MR. STEWART: The only thing that would drive him to the country is a strike on the part of the teachers; and I think we all have at heart to hope for that, notwithstanding what has been said on the floor of this House. (Applause.)

Premier Enters Debate.

PREMIER SAUNDERS: I am sorry my hon. friends have been so ready to suggest that this is just a gesture, as if we didn't intend to do what was right by the teachers. They have got it into their heads that there is some ulterior object, and they say, Why can't we take them into our confidence. The fact of the matter, so far as the Government is concerned, is that we are going to give them every reasonable consideration. We have not arrived at what questions will be submitted, but it takes time to consider that. We will have ample time. This referendum is a very reasonable one. Because you want us to follow the Statute of 1919 is no reason why we should do so. If we are to simply continue following precedent we would get nowhere in anything. We want to advance now and again; and as I see it, so far as this legislation is concerned it is as good an Act as I have ever seen in regard to taking a referendum and getting an expression of opinion, because, as I said, the very questions that will be submitted to the people will be questions that will be receiving very much consideration before being submitted. Even if we had questions here to submit, we know perfectly well what happened some questions before; they would be discussed ad infinitum.

HON. MR. STEWART: Why shouldn't they be?

PREMIER SAUNDERS: What I am saying is this, that the Government takes the responsibility; we feel that we are quite capable of discussing this matter with the Board of Education and arriving at a decision that will be satisfactory to all concerned. Please don't think that only the teachers will be considered. There are other considerations. The people themselves surely have a right to know, for instance, whether that tax now existing on real estate and personal property should be done away with. Personally I have no hesitation in saying that I am opposed to that; and I don't believe the people would be satisfied. I believe there should be an education tax, but I further believe that the tax that now exists on real estate is a very reasonable one. So far as this bill is concerned, there is no object that I can see to be gained by delay. If you can point to anything that is unfair or unreasonable; but honestly I haven't heard any criticism except that it is just a "gesture." You have that in mind. It is no gesture. The thing is definite; we want to do what is fair and right and there is no ulterior object, and we are going to consider the questions in the best interests of the people and teachers alike. What reasonable opposition can there be to putting through this Act? We will then know

we have an Act whereby we can frame our questions to submit to the people and let them decide.

DR. MCMILLAN: We are getting information gradually. We know now that the Government have not considered the Commission's report; they haven't had time to consider it, and they are not prepared to give a definite opinion, or formulate any proper plan. I think you all admit that—that you have not had time. If that be so, what is the idea of pressing this bill? You want to pass an Act, and you yourselves admit that you do not know what the result is going to be. We are not objecting to the machinery of the referendum. The promoter made a very curious statement when he said that the attitude of the Opposition is that we would like to delay the teachers' increase in salaries for a year. The Minister of Agriculture knows better than that; he knows he cannot bluff anyone by a statement of that kind. Any discussion that we are having on this bill will not delay the teachers in getting their salaries by one fraction of a second.

HON. MR. LEA: If you prevented it passing, it might.

DR. MCMILLAN: The passing of the referendum?

HON. MR. LEA: The passing of this bill.

DR. MCMILLAN: Is this going to affect the teachers getting their salaries?

HON. MR. LEA: Sure, until such time as this is passed.

HON. MR. STEWART: My hon. friend knows better than that.

DR. MCMILLAN: If this bill is turned down today, it is going to prevent the teachers getting their salaries for another year?

HON. MR. LEA: It might.

DR. MCMILLAN: Did you ever hear such nonsense? (Laughter.) If this bill is passed today, are the teachers going to get their salaries a year quicker?

HON. MR. LEA: How do you know, if there is an election held?

DR. MCMILLAN: You are not going to hold an election.

HON. MR. LEA: How do you know?

DR. MCMILLAN: You should know; are you?

HON. MR. LEA: You should know; you are telling me.

DR. MCMILLAN: No, you won't have an election this year, because you haven't got the courage. (Applause.) You are just waiting to see if you can get something from Ottawa before you go to the country.

HON. MR. LEA: You are just saying that.

Paying the Bills

DR. MCMILLAN: The Premier says very properly that there is more to consider than the teachers. Of course there are other people, who have to pay the bill. I believe he is perfectly right, but don't you think if you had something definite to place before these people in the meantime, that you would have a better chance of persuading them? He says he does not think the personal property tax should be abolished; and I think he is right. But surely my hon. friends have some idea of how much money must be raised to increase the teachers' salaries. Couldn't that be indicated?

HON. MR. LEA: It is in the report.

DR. MCMILLAN: Certainly; but why not put it in the bill, so that the people will know? This bill as it is given to us is not implementing that report of the Commission.

MR. MCPHEE: It will later on.

DR. MCMILLAN: How do you know that?

MR. MCPHEE: Oh, well, we have an idea.

DR. MCMILLAN: You have? But we are not legislating on your ideas; we are legislating on something definite. Your ideas may be all right, my hon. friend from New Haven, but they don't appear on the statute books of this province. (Laughter.) That is what we are objecting to. We have been called upon too often to put through half-baked legislation under this Government, and this is an example; something which means nothing except to enable you to say to the teachers: "Oh, yes, we are doing something; we have the Act right here." "An Act for what? When are the people going to be told what they are going to vote on, Mr. Promoter?"

PREMIER SAUNDERS: They will get quite sufficient notice about that. The teachers themselves will know long before it is submitted to the people.

DR. MCMILLAN: But we are not to know?

PREMIER SAUNDERS: We have no objection.

DR. MCMILLAN: But we are not entitled to know now?

PREMIER SAUNDERS: I say there is no necessity for it.

DR. MCMILLAN: Of course not; we are not supposed to know what

we are legislating on.

PREMIER SAUNDERS: You are legislating on this bill; and I think it is a very reasonable one.

DR. MCMILLAN: On what?

PREMIER SAUNDERS: To take a referendum.

DR. MCMILLAN: On what?

PREMIER SAUNDERS: On such questions as may be decided.

DR. MCMILLAN: There you are; that is the vicious circle.

MR. ARSENAULT: That is the trouble. It is too serious a question to rush it through in this way. For my part I would be quite willing to come back here for two weeks longer and give the members of the Government the time to study and ponder this question, and put it through in better shape; because I think if we intend to have a referendum and have the people vote intelligently, and have it made a non-political issue so that the members of the Opposition can join hands with the Government, it should be more explicit. As it is, it may be that they just want to put this through in a hurry, and there may be a Federal election and there is a possibility—a remote possibility—of the King Government coming back. In that case it might be advisable to have a local election this year.

HON. MR. LEA: Will you object to that, to give the teachers higher salaries?

MR. ARSENAULT: No, but we want to know what is going to go before the people, so that there will be joint action between the Conservatives and Liberals. (Applause.)

MR. MCPHEE: I understand that the Teachers' Federation will have a say in those questions?

HON. MR. LEA: Just the Government.

MR. MCPHEE: The Teachers' Federation have no say?

HON. MR. LEA: Oh, we don't say that; but the Government takes the responsibility.

The Democratic Way.

HON. MR. STEWART: The promoter has expressed himself as being a strong supporter of democracy, and he rather insinuated that I was not. Now our position is this: We do not know even what field will be covered by the questions to be placed on the ballot. But passing this over for a moment, we will assume that the questions are formulated and that they are submitted to the people; and after that, the Government passes a statute. The statute may or may not completely conform to and embody the answers to the questions. It is very difficult to ask a series of questions, and I am stating that now with full appreciation of the abilities that have already been referred to by my hon. friend the leader of the Government as being possessed by this Government. (Laughter.) I say it is exceedingly difficult to frame a series of questions that will embody every aspect and phase of a statute. If, on the other hand, you enact a statute conditional, if you frame a statute and place it on the order book to become a law only after it has been passed upon by the people, the people then have the whole statute before them. They can study it in every aspect; they know every shade of meaning in that statute before they vote; and they will have a comprehension of the situation which I submit they will never have under the other method, even with the abilities of this Government behind them. Now I want to know which is the more democratic? Take the people into your confidence by putting a statute on the books where it will automatically come into force on their say-so, or put a series of questions that may or may not cover the legislation which the people have in mind? There is no comparison. I claim, between the two methods, one is so much more democratic than the other. If we pass the statute I have suggested, and if we have an election between now and next year, the statute can be put into effect immediately. By my hon. friend's method, you will have to wait for another election to implement your referendum by legislation. (Applause.) So I am now suggesting a method that will give the teachers an increase much more quickly than his own. (Loud applause.)

"Half-Baked" Legislation.

HON. MR. LEA: My hon. friend knows that if a ballot is submitted it will be thoroughly discussed in the press. Does my hon. friend suggest that there will be one intelligent man unacquainted with all that may be represented by the ballot? With regard to my hon. friend from Charlottetown, I thought it remarkable that he should say that this legislation, like some other legislation before this House, was "half baked."

I think that remark is unworthy of any man representing the intelligent city of Charlottetown.

DR. MCMILLAN: I take the full responsibility for the remark. I will say some of the legislation was not even half baked.

HON. MR. LEA: That may be your opinion.

DR. MCMILLAN: I want to ask the promoter; supposing you take the ballot at the next election, will it be implemented?

HON. MR. LEA: It will be implemented whenever we can pass legislation.

DR. MCMILLAN: When would that be?

HON. MR. LEA: As expeditiously as possible.

HON. MR. STEWART: Would you call a special session to implement it?

HON. MR. LEA: Special sessions have been called to implement legislation. I will remember attending one.

HON. MR. STEWART: When?

HON. MR. LEA: To implement the Health Tax.

HON. MR. STEWART: During the War?

HON. MR. LEA: Yes; just for one day. And it could be done just as easily again.

DR. MCMILLAN: If you want us to believe that you are sincere in desiring to help the teachers, why not adopt the plan suggested by my hon. colleague, the leader of the Opposition? You can have a complete statute drafted, ready to be presented to the people, and it can go into effect by Order in Council on the day after the vote is taken? What does my hon. friend say to that?

HON. MR. LEA: Our statement is that this is a quicker plan. It is just a difference of opinion.