

# Our Letter from Ottawa

BY AGNES C. MACPHAIL, M.P.

The very large increase in defence estimates threatens to be the most contentious matter which will come up this session. The Hon. Ian MacKenzie, Minister of National Defence, will shortly introduce estimates totalling over 33 million dollars, an increase of 15 millions.

The matter has not yet come before the House, but the government, apparently anticipating opposition, has used every opportunity of creating a favorable atmosphere for them when finally they arrive. Several such have occurred this week. There was the continued debate on Mr. Woodsworth's neutrality resolution. Mr. Heaps suggesting that we ask Mr. Roosevelt to call a world conference, and Mr. Douglas' motion suggesting that, in the event of another war, involving Canada's active participation, every agency, financial, industrial, transportation or natural resources, shall automatically be conscripted for the duration of such a war. Leading government members used each of these as an excuse for making strong, almost belligerent speeches in favor of the huge military expenditure.

Other prominent issues of the week were the home improvement bill and another all-day discussion on the necessity of amending the B.N.A. Act.

For the renovation of a single dwelling, a loan up to \$2000 can be secured, with further amounts for a multiple house, duplex, apartments, etc. The borrower pays the loaning company interest by having his loan discounted. The amount of interest figures out to 6.32%, although in the Act it is said to be a discount of 3.25%, which is but another way of stating the charges. The government will guarantee the loaning company against loss up to 15% of the aggregate loan, after the lenders have exhausted every effort to collect.

A publicity campaign will be carried on "To make the Canadian public home-repair conscious" and to explain the plan. Mr. Dunning told the House that the cost of this campaign would not be borne by the government but by private funds raised by business interests which expect to benefit by the expenditure and public-spirited citizens who wish to see the plan carried out. The Dominion government, in announcing the plan some time ago, stated its opinion that the improved properties should not be subject to increased tax assessments. Local committees are taking the matter up with the provincial governments.

J. A. Marshall (Social Credit) claims that the banks will simply create the 50 million dollars of credit necessary to fulfill the scheme, lend it to the people of Canada and, in the process of time, get back the whole amount plus \$3,160,000 for services rendered. And yet, he said, we do not hear a word about inflation. He thought the interest charge too high, pointing out that the Canadian Farm Loan Board charges only 5% and is said to be making a profit. It was claimed that the legislation is not sufficiently wide in scope, since it does not make provision for those who most need to improve their homes but can least afford to do so. Only those applications which are approved by the loaning company can come under the scheme. In other words, the loan is not made on the basis of the need but on ability to repay the loan. All, however, admitted that it was a step in the right direction.

When the British North America Act was written, no provision was made for its amendment, so that in many things we are still bound by the thinking of wise and good men who lived many years ago, before the industrial age, and who could not possibly foresee the needs of this day.

Mr. Bennett assumed that the federal government had the power to enact legislation regulating the hours of industry, establishing a weekly day of rest and determining minimum wages. But, in a recent judgment in the Privy Council (in Great Britain), it was determined otherwise. Uniform legislation for all the provinces on these and many other matters is needed if there is not to be a constant shifting of la-

bor to the provinces with the greatest security and of manufacturers to the provinces with the lowest costs. Mr. Coldwell, in presenting his resolution asking for establishment of a committee to enquire into the constitutional changes necessary to modernize our constitutional practice, argued that today a strong central authority is needed if democracy is to function sufficiently well. He cited the success of the United States in securing social security legislation, even with greater constitutional difficulties than we are likely to experience.

New Zealand, which is not a federal union, has, under a Socialist administration, headed by the Hon. Michael Savage, who, incidentally, is a devout Roman Catholic, enacted a series of progressive measures giving the central government control over the financial system, the marketing of primary products, so that minimum fixed prices are guaranteed to the producer, and hours and wages in industry. Mr. Coldwell told the House.

The Hon. Norman McLeod Rogers, Minister of Labour, made an academic speech on the matter. He sees no way out unless the initiative is taken by the provinces, "but I wonder whether, in view of recent decisions of the Privy Council, the initiative does not now belong to the provinces."

And again, Mr. Rogers says, "The decisions of the Privy Council, as announced last week, have gone further in emphasizing and entrenching provincial rights than any decision given for many years." He criticized Mr. Bennett severely but offered nothing but a sit-and-wait policy.

In my opinion, division of authority, with lack of power on the part of the federal or central government, is doing more than anything else to make democracy ineffective in Canada. Unless the changed conditions of today are to be taken into account by the Privy Council to a degree that affects their decision, the B.N.A. Act must be amended. If the provinces have to carry the burden of the ever-increasing social legislation, then their right of taxation must be greatly increased. But even that would not result in uniformity of social services over the whole country.

Any debate touching preparations for war this session has been bitter. All the old fears are being revived: that Canada is not safe from Germany, from Japan and, I suppose, from Russia. And phrases I thought never to hear again are used repeatedly: "Make the world safe for democracy", "Preparedness brings peace", and even that old boner: "We must defend our women and children."

The Right Hon. Ernest Lapointe made an impassioned speech, partly in defence of the military estimates, which were not before the House, and partly in bitter criticism of Mr. Woodsworth's speech and attitude. While, on the one hand, Mr. Lapointe claimed that the increase in defence estimates is intended for the defence of Canada only, at another place he implied, if he did not say, that complete neutrality on Canada's part would be equivalent to breaking from the Empire and the League. They seemed to me two irreconcilable statements.

The Secretary of State, Mr. Rinfret, went further and confessed that he was too good a Britisher to say that if any part of the Empire were attacked Canada should not go to its aid.

A Social Creditor, not to be outdone in patriotism (Mr. Johnstone of Bow River), expressed the view that Canada should have the biggest navy, the biggest army and the biggest air force and yet keep them all in Canada when the war breaks out. Most countries are content if they excel in one of these fields, but we are to out-Britain Britain on the sea, out-Russia Russia in the air and out-German Germany on the land. And after all that, surely we are safe in our beds.

Mr. Woodsworth, in closing the debate, urged us not to be deceived: "Armaments mean war." He quoted Earl Grey as having said, after the war, "The enormous growth of armament, the sense of insecurity and fear caused by them, it was

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these that made war inevitable." Mr. Woodsworth protested against any greater expenditure on defence, while veterans of the last war and citizens of Canada do without the necessities and amenities of life. He expressed the fear that the units now being built in Canada were made to fit into the Empire scheme of defence like spare parts. "I am sure", he said, "that every effort will be made to draw Canada into such relationship that Great Britain will be free to carry on her imperialistic enterprises." Frankly, I am afraid of the influence the coronation ceremonies may have on those Canadians who go to London to represent the government.

Today's paper carries the statement by Sir Samuel Hoare, First Lord of the Admiralty, to the effect that Empire defence will be discussed at the Imperial Conference following the coronation, and that, in his opinion, the Empire should be one defence unit. "But", he said, "we should make a great mistake if we tried to impose some rigid plan upon other members of the Empire."

AGNES C. MACPHAIL

House of Commons, Ottawa, Saturday, February 6, 1937.

Mrs. Wm. Haliday is visiting her mother at Corbetton.



FRIDAY, FEB. 12th—Social Evening for members and their friends. All members are asked to come out and enjoy the evening.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15—Regular Meeting for General Business.

ROY FREEMAN, Noble Grand  
W. J. COLGAN, Recording Sec.  
HERB. WALKER, Financial Sec.  
W. J. HOWARD, Treasurer

### EUPHRASIA COUNCIL

Euphrasia Council met pursuant to adjournment with all the members present and the Reeve in the chair.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and adopted.

Communications were read.

Applications were received from James Gilchrist and Chas. Fothergill for the office of Assessor for 1937.

Miller - Carruthers—That the following taxes be struck from the defaulters' list, they having been paid to the Collector: north half lot 7, con. 8; lot 8, con. 8; east quarter lot 12, con. 8; east quarter lot 13, con. 10.—Carried.

Carruthers - Miller—That Chas. Fothergill be appointed Assessor for the year 1937 at a salary of \$115.—Carried.

Parker - Pottage—That the Council receive the sum of \$11.20 from Department of Welfare and hand to the Treasurer with a copy of this resolution.—Carried.

Parker - Miller—That Earl Kirkpatrick be appointed Weed Inspector.—Carried.

Miller - Carruthers—That By-Laws No. 2, appointing Auditors; No. 3, appointing Weed Inspector; No. 4, amending By-Law No. 14 of 1935, and No. 5, appointing Assessor, be now read a first time.—Cd.

Parker - Pottage—That By-Laws Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5 be now read a second and third time and finally passed.—Carried.

The following accounts were ordered paid: R. E. Brown, Meaford, stamp ink for Clerk, 40 cents; the Treasurer of Grey County, Euphrasia's share of hospital account for Mrs. Ed. Parks and Allan McCullough, \$17.50; The Markdale Farmers' Co-Operative, relief supplies for Woods family; County Office Supply Co., \$31.97; Dept. of Health, insulin for Mrs. P. Bovair, \$1.05; Road Voucher No. 6, \$11.10; No. 7, \$7.40.

Miller - Carruthers—That Council adjourn to Monday, March 1st. Carried.

Edward Lanktree, Clerk

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