

# MARRIED WOMEN'S VOTE OPPOSED BY MINISTER

## Hon. Mr. Lucas Presents Arguments Against Measure Advocated by Mr. Tolmie—Mr. Rowell and Others Point Out Possibilities in Reform

Arguments not strictly confined to the subject were advanced in the Legislature yesterday when the second reading of the bill to extend the municipal franchise to married women was discussed. Speakers, particularly those on the Government side, launched on the subject of women's suffrage in general instead of confining their remarks to what the bill specifically proposed. In the absence, through indisposition, of Mr. J. C. Elliott (West Middlesex), in whose name the bill stood, Mr. J. C. Tolmie (Windsor) moved the second reading in a convincing speech. Hon. Mr. Lucas, the Attorney-General, opposed the bill. Mr. Sam Carter (South Wellington) supported the bill, and Mr. Donovan (Brockville) opposed it. Mr. Rowell was the last speaker, and after addressing the House for a short while stated he did not intend to speak further that afternoon, and moved the adjournment of the House, which was agreed to.

### Justified by Plebiscites.

In opening the debate, Mr. Tolmie alluded to the plebiscites which had been taken in different municipalities and the favorable vote in every case to what was proposed by the bill. He maintained the bill was in no sense revolutionary. Great Britain was exceedingly careful in regard to its legislation, and he did not think they would go far astray if they followed what the old land had done in this matter. For years gone by Great Britain had had legislation practically of the nature which this bill proposed. In New Zealand and Australia the granting of the franchise to women had proved satisfactory, and he thought this Legislature should take a forward step. The speaker recognized that they should be exceedingly careful in extending the franchise, but he did not think anyone would say they were taking away any of its sacredness or sanctity when they extended that franchise to women as well as to men. It seemed to him they could find no class more intelligent, more capable, than the women to whom they would extend the vote through that bill.

The Prime Minister had said it was by no means certain the women wanted the vote. "How are we to find out the women want it?" asked Mr. Tolmie. "They have petitioned for it, their husbands have voted in favor of it. How are we to find out they want to exercise the vote? The only way and the simple way, it seems to me, would be to give them an opportunity of exercising it. If do not know of a single objection that has ever gone to this Government or any other Government against extending the municipal franchise to married women who owned and possessed property."

### Minister Opposes Bill.

Hon. Mr. Lucas, as at last session, was the chief spokesman against the bill. He complimented Major Tolmie on the "very reasonable and satisfactory manner" in which he had discussed the subject.

Proceeding, the Attorney-General said the intention was to give to any married woman owning or occupying property the right to vote. In a village any woman owning or occupying

property worth \$100 would have the right to vote. In the case of owning or occupying a house of \$200 both woman and husband would have this right. That was going fairly far. It was argued why should an unmarried woman with property have a vote and then when she gets married she loses the right to vote? but Mr. Lucas took the view that if what was advocated were adopted inconsistencies would not be removed. Instead of having one they would introduce other inconsistencies more glaring. He instanced the transient tenant who comes into a town and rents a house worth \$200. Both he and his wife would have the vote, but the housekeeper, who built his own house, owned his house, and who had it in his own name, would only have one vote.

On the property and representation argument, Mr. Lucas said the present law did not in any real sense recognize the representation of property. The man with \$100,000 property had just the same right to vote as the man who walked in and bought a \$100 vacant lot.

Mr. Studholme—Why not?

Hon. Mr. Lucas stated he was not arguing along that line, but was merely showing it was not a question of representation of property.

### Voter's Permanent Interest.

Mr. Lucas said there was some principle behind the present basis for voting, but it was not the property basis. The aim was to have an electorate to whom they could appeal who were likely to have some permanent interest in the locality. That principle was not perfect, but it was more nearly so than any argument that they were representing property in the present system of voting. The present bill was only a step, but the final goal, as proclaimed by the advanced suffrage societies, was participation in all branches of Government in the country and in the national life of the country on the same basis as men. Were they prepared to take even the first step to the final goal?

Mr. Tolmie—I would like to ask the Minister if we have not taken the first step already when we have given the voting to widows and unmarried women?

Hon. Mr. Lucas—Yes, to some extent. (Opposition laughter and applause.) But, as I pointed out, the aim behind that was to secure something of a permanent electorate, not to represent property. The important issue is: what is the next step? My honorable friend has said Britain has granted what has been asked. Had that made the suffragists quiet? It had only stirred up a militant agitation. They want more.

### Women Indifferent.

Dealing with the general question of woman suffrage, Mr. Lucas declared the great mass of women appeared to be indifferent as to the exercise of the franchise. In California, where women's franchise was given in 1911, only 27 per cent. of the available women registered, as compared with 93 per cent. of the men. He twitted the Opposition with throwing out crumbs of comfort to the ladies so that they might engage in guerilla warfare against the Government.

### The Voice of Guelph.

Mr. Sam Carter (South Wellington) said the Attorney-General had gone over the question widely, gently and very inconsistently. "He also," declared the speaker, "touched the matter very like a Conservative, and I must frankly admit I am the opposite of a Conservative. We are asked whether anyone asked for this. I can only say the city I come from (Guelph) voted with a large majority in favor of it, so there is some sentiment there."

The arguments which had been used against the bill were the same as those advanced in 1832 to keep the franchise from the common people. He looked at the question from the moral side, and instanced the case of Illinois, where the women had played a decided part in wiping