

ONTARIO GIVES VOTE TO WOMEN

Hope to Have Change Ready
for Next Election

WAR WORK RECOGNIZED

**Mr. N. W. Rowell Upholds Premier
Hearst's Decision and Shows How
Liberals Had Advocated Measure
for Several Years.**

"Having taken our women into partnership with us in our tremendous task, upon which the success of the future of the British Empire depends and the civilization of the world, I ask can we justly deny them a share in the government of the country, the right to have a say about the making of the laws they have been so heroically trying to defend? My answer is I think not."

Thus spoke Premier Sir William Hearst in the Legislature yesterday when that body made history by endorsing without dissent the great principle of votes for women, thus completing the chain of Provinces that have adopted this reform from the Pacific Ocean to the Ottawa River.

"I feel the time has now come," the Premier went on, "when we should give our women a greater part in the public affairs and the greater service that the ballot affords. (Applause.) In this case the Government endorses the principle of the bill before the House. That means they take Government responsibility for it. I call for my supporters to vote in its favor, and I take full responsibility as leader of this House for what the vote may be. (Applause.) This is not the time to discuss the details of the bill. Opportunity, of course, will be given in full time for that. There is one point, however, I may mention. The Government having decided to give women the vote, it is anxious they should have full opportunity of exercising that right at the earliest date possible, and the Government will try and devise some plan whereby they will be entitled to record their vote at the next Provincial election."

The Suffrage Movement.

Sir William Hearst spoke to a crowded and expectant House and galleries when the second reading of the bill of Mr. J. W. Johnson, Conservative member for West Hastings, to grant the legislative franchise, came up. Later a bill introduced by Mr. J. C. Elliott, Liberal member for West Middlesex, to give women the municipal franchise, was also given second reading.

Premier Hearst stated that in 1915 the deputation of women who called upon the Cabinet proposed the right only of married women to vote at municipal elections. Last year the deputation suggested the Government might take a referendum on the subject to ascertain the opinion of the public. It was a question that might be considered, said the Premier, if the Government in supporting the bill would, if anything, not be ahead of public opinion, whether the women of Ontario are sufficiently roused upon this question to assure the measure's success.

Suffrage Not an Issue.

"The matter up to the present time has never been an issue before the public," said the Premier. "It has

never been very seriously discussed on the platforms throughout the Province; there is the further fact that we have no evidence that the great mass of women themselves want the franchise. We have no positive evidence that they would exercise it, but we have certainly had at least some evidence that there are a number of women who do not want the franchise, do not ask the franchise, feeling they have a greater and better influence without it.

Premier and Petitions.

"It is true a petition is being circulated at present in favor of the bill. I have no doubt it is being largely signed. I have some information of the signatures that have been obtained up to the present time. I would gladly have had the benefit of the complete petition and have heard what the promoters had to say before this bill came up, but the question is before the House, and we must decide it without further delay. I do not, however, place a great deal of importance on petitions. A petition on almost any subject can be obtained with a great deal of ease and without very much effort, and I have no doubt that if a strongly-organized effort were made to secure a petition against this bill a somewhat formidable petition could have been secured as well.

Premier Wants No Divisions in War-time

"Last year, as I mentioned, the women who saw me asked for a referendum. There are many arguments that might well be advanced in favor of that course. It may be said that the male voters of the Province should be consulted before we enacted a law that so strongly and vitally affects the constitution of the Province. It may be well argued that the women themselves should have an opportunity in some concrete way of expressing their view as to whether or not they were willing to assume the burden and to discharge the duties and obligations which this bill casts upon them.

Wants United People.

"Were we not in the midst of a war demanding the combined thought and action of the Province I might have been inclined to take some means of getting the opinion of the people on this subject. My view, however, is that at the present time no campaign should be launched which would have the slightest tendency to divide the people of this Province if it can possibly be avoided. (Applause.) With the knowledge I have been able to get, with the sense of public opinion I have been able to acquire, I think the Government ought to take the stand without any reference to the people or for any further reference of any kind.

War Advances Opinion on Woman Suffrage

"The war has changed many conditions and has crystallized public opinion on many subjects indeed. Legislation has been passed by this House that I doubt it would have been possible to pass or would have had success after being passed but for the war. In my opinion, judging the sense of the public as well as I can, opinion in favor of this measure has advanced more since the war commenced, since the last twelve months, than it has advanced in a quarter of a century before. (Applause.) The splendid work of the women throughout the whole British Empire and throughout the countries of the allies has changed the attitude of the public on this question entirely. The splendid part they have taken and the splendid sacrifice they have made have broken down the prejudices that existed in the minds of many men and women, too. Men, some of them members of this House, who bitterly opposed this measure a year ago, are now enthusiastic supporters of this measure at this time, in view of the fine record made by the women of this Province in connection with the war."

Splendid Work of Women.

The Premier said the women of Ontario had responded nobly, worthy of the best traditions of their race and sex, and he did not think a better record of service, sacrifice, and devotion could be found. Sir William