

Wednesday, April 27

# LEGISLATORS VOTE TO RETAIN CHURCHES AS SEPARATE ENTITIES

**Private Bills Committee  
Adopts Resolution for  
Amendment of Church  
Union Bill, Giving Any  
Congregation Right to  
Remain in Its Mother  
Church and to Keep Its  
Property Therein**

**CHANGE IS FAVORED  
BY VOTE OF 36 TO 26**

**Decision Comes After  
Three Hours of Vigorous  
Discussion Marked by  
Acrimonious Exchanges  
—Parties Are Divided on  
Issue — Committee Ad-  
journs to Report Later**

Anti-Unionists won a victory yesterday before the Private Bills Committee of the Legislature when, by a vote of 36 to 26, an amendment to the Church Union Bill was adopted providing for the preservation of the three Church bodies "as separate entities" and giving to any congregation the right, by vote, to remain in its Mother Church and to keep any property it owns.

This alteration in the act, which was in the form of an amendment to a previous amendment, was moved by William Finlayson (Conservative, East Simcoe) and seconded by John A. Currie (Conservative, Southeast Toronto), and was as follows:

## **The Amendment Which Carried.**

"That before proceeding further with the bill the Law Clerk of the committee be instructed to draft clauses by which the bill will be amended by adding clauses providing for the preservation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Methodist Church and the Congregational churches as separate entities, and for giving to any congregation the right, by vote of its members, to remain in its Mother Church, and to keep therein any property owned by it."

By parties, there voted for the amendment 24 Conservatives, 9 Liberals and 3 Progressives. By parties, there voted against the amendment 18 Conservatives, 3 Liberals and 5 Progressives. Listed with the Progressives in the affirmative vote is one Labor man.

The vote came after a three-hour discussion in which the arguments, pro and con were more vigorous than they were on the preceding Friday. The Anti-Unionists were in much stronger force, and their arguments met with applause, not only from members of the committee, but at times from adherents of the same cause in the body of the audience.

## **A Warm Exchange.**

Party lines were shattered, and members of the same political faith commented at times on each other's arguments without reserve. One of the most sensational features of the day was a sharp clash between the Chairman, Hon. W. F. Nickle, Attorney-General, and Hon. Thomas Crawford, Minister without portfolio, and a member of the same Cabinet. Mr. Crawford maintained that a

certain amendment was out of order, and Mr. Nickle rose to announce his ruling on the matter. Mr. Crawford kept on talking, and Mr. Nickle remained standing.

"The Chairman is on his feet!" he reminded Mr. Crawford.

"I was on mine first, sir, I beg your pardon!" retorted Mr. Crawford warmly. Amid cries of "Order!" he kept on talking, Mr. Nickle remaining standing. In spite of considerable noise, Mr. Crawford finished what he had to say, declaring again the motion was out of order.

When he sat down Mr. Nickle said he wanted to make his position clear. "I don't propose to be hurried by any group or body," he said. "This is a

great question, and the scales are going to be held evenly. There is going to be ample discussion of the principle of the bill."

Mr. Brackin was active in his opposition to the bill, and hurled questions at many members supporting it. Once, when Mr. Fisher was speaking and Mr. Brackin was asking questions, the Chairman said: "Mr. Fisher has the floor."

"That is all he does hold," remarked Mr. Brackin audibly.

As soon as the meeting opened the Chairman read a telegram from the Presbyterian Church at Winchester saying that a telegram sent to the member of the riding, Mr. Sweet, by five elders of the church, asking Mr. Sweet to support the bill, did not speak for the church. Mr. Sweet, explaining, said he had not said that these men had spoken for the church officials. He handed in to the Chairman a petition signed by 255 names of members and adherents of the church opposing the bill.

## **Mr. Raney Also Files Petitions.**

Mr. Raney then filed the petitions against the bill from the two churches in Elora and Fergus, which he referred to in his Friday speech, and which, he said, he had omitted to file on Friday.

"Gentlemen, the discussion is on Clause 1 of the bill," said Mr. Nickle.

"What is the effect of passing this clause?" asked Mr. Keith.

Mr. Nickle said that the effect of passing the clause would be that some bill, probably, would be reported to the House.

## **The Keith Amendment.**

Mr. Keith, seconded by Mr. Lewis, then moved the following:

"That the bill be amended by adding a clause providing that where a congregation of a Presbyterian church or a portion thereof is opposed to uniting in accordance with the bill, the assets of the said church shall be distributed on the same basis as the census taken of the congregation shows a percentage for and against Union, and where the parties are unable to agree, distribution of all assets shall be made by arbitration, and those opposed to Union shall remain as a Presbyterian church."

Mr. Graves then said he thought, if what he had been told was true—that if the amendment of last Friday had carried there would have been a revolution in the Presbyterian Church—that members of the committee who were Presbyterians should have advised the committee of that.

Mr. Lewis said that he did not think anyone present wanted to block Union on the part of those who wished to unite. What they wanted to make absolutely certain was that a certain section of the Presbyterian Church which wanted to remain out of the Union should be absolutely protected.

## **Resents Pulpit Strictures.**

He said he wanted to join in criticizing most severely the strictures passed on the committee from the pulpits last Sunday. He said had been approached in the corridor of the building and "almost three