

The Markdale Standard

Published every Thursday at
The Standard Printing Office
Main Street, Markdale, Ont.

Member C. W. N. A.

\$1.50 per year in Canada.
\$2.00 in the United States.

A. E. COLGAN & SON, Publishers

The Session Nearing Its Close

With the Budget Debate out of the way, the Legislature last week settled down to the passing of what are known as the Estimates, or the money necessary to carry on the work of the various Government Departments, until the end of the present Fiscal year, namely the 31st of March next. Prior to the Hepburn Government, the Province's year ended on Oct. 31st. This, however, was changed to March 31st, and this Session the Budget Debate ran so close to this date, that the Government was obliged to speed up the money votes, to have the money passed and available for the various departments on April 1st. To accomplish this, the House sat one night till 4.30 a.m., and the following night till 1.30 a.m. In order to finish by Easter, the Legislature now meets at 11 a.m. and usually reaches adjournment at an hour sometime late that night or early in the morning.

A very important announcement on Hydro policy was made in the House on Friday, when the Hon. T. B. McQueen told the Legislature that "at the end of the tenure of office of T. Stewart Lyon, the present Chairman, the Hydro enterprise should be controlled by a Government Department". "In future", Mr. McQueen said, "the Commission should consist of either Cabinet Ministers, or private members of the

Legislature." This is a radical departure from previous policy, and will call forth much discussion, and perhaps, one might add, not a little criticism. The Government feels, according to Mr. McQueen, that it should exercise a greater measure of control, inasmuch as the Province has guaranteed some \$200,000,000 "for Hydro or its bonds."

The action of the Federal Government in cutting relief grants by 15% was the subject of a debate in the House on Thursday last. Sam. Lawrence, C.C.F., Hamilton, arose before the orders of the day, to ask the Government what they intended to do about this matter. The Premier, in reply, said that "the first intimation the Province had of the proposed cut in grants, was contained in a telegram received that morning from the Federal Minister, Mr. Roger." "The Ontario Government", the Premier added, "was not going to reduce its relief grant to the municipalities as a result, but neither could the Province afford to pay the Dominion's share, so that the net reduction of 7 1/2% would have to be passed on to the Municipality." Readers will recall that the Provincial Budget contained \$12,000,000 for relief purposes, on the understanding that the Dominion would meet this amount dollar for dollar. M. M. McBride, Liberal, Brantford, argued that the municipalities, in many cases, would go broke if they were forced to pay heavier relief costs. He emphasized that unemployment was a National problem, and that the Province was already paying more than its share. He pointedly reminded McKenzie King, that he, himself, said, prior to the last election, that unemployment was a National problem, and that the credit of Canada would be utilized to combat this blight on our country's progress (unemployment). Mr. Lawrence, in winding up the discussion, said he agreed with the Government's action, and joined with them in forwarding to Ottawa a vigorous protest.

On Friday last, Premier Hepburn introduced the amendment to the Assessment Act, that is commonly known as the Separate School Bill. The main change is all contained in one word, the changing of the word "May" in the existing law, to the word "Shall" in the new legislation, making it obligatory on the part of corporations to divide their taxes between the two types of schools in proportion to the creed of their shareholders, or, in other words, where formerly they might do it, now they must. The Hon. George Henry to-day, Monday, sets forth the opposition viewpoint, and the debate on this question may be prolonged. This is the only important piece of legislation that stands in the way of an Easter adjournment, which is scheduled for Thursday of this week.

F. R. OLIVER

Miss Macphail's Weekly Letter From Ottawa

The pronouncement made by Mr. Aberhart, the Prime Minister of Alberta, that he was unable to meet obligations falling due, is undoubtedly the political highlight of the week. The Federal Government refused to extend further credit to the Province unless the latter would agree to give the Dominion a say in the borrowings of the Province. This Premier Aberhart refused to do, since he believed it would lessen the control of Alberta over her own affairs.

The amount of money needed by Alberta to meet the maturing obligations was \$3,200,000, while the Province had on hand for the purpose only \$600,000. They propose to pay the interest to bondholders, but not the principal at this time.

The action of Premier Aberhart is likely to kill the "Loan Council Bill" which the Government proposed introducing this session. The Federal Government had hoped by this bill to exert control over the borrowings of the Provinces. This curtailing of sovereign control within the Province is resented not only in Alberta, though possibly most strongly there. Since Governments borrow from banks, such an arrangement would undoubtedly have tightened the hold of a small financial group over Provincial affairs.

Gerry McGeer made a most arresting speech on the debt burden of municipalities and provinces and warned the Federal government that they could not continue to carry the burden imposed upon them under the present financial structure. "Many of our Canadian municipalities cannot escape bankruptcy", he stated. Mr. McGeer is Mayor of Vancouver and has been a leading figure in the Conference of Mayors.

He gave the number of defaulting municipalities in Saskatchewan as 157 and said that in Quebec 57 cities and towns were under the control of the municipal commissions, while in Ontario municipalities had defaulted to the extent of eleven million dollars. Mr. McGeer cited Montreal as an example of the impossibility of carrying present relief loads under our stringent financial set-up. The total debt of Montreal is \$268,000,000, which requires one-half of the taxes for interest. The total tax levy at the moment is \$34,000,000 with new special taxes being proposed on everything from parking signs and new plumbing to night clubs.

"When taxation arises to the point where income is exhausted, then government is threatened", said McGeer. He believed we were approaching that point and said this condition has grown up under a so-called "sound money" system, a defunct system evolved in the last century, and would not meet the needs of to-day.

A bill to establish a national employment commission has been given its second reading. It proposes to clothe the commission with authority to study the whole subject of unemployment, to classify the unemployed according to former work done and whether or not they are now fit to be employed again. It further provides for consultation and co-operation with all bodies, governmental or otherwise, that have dealt with unemployment and relief. It seems late in the day to be making a comprehensive study and the value of the bill will be determined only by the action which follows the study.

The Hon. Norman Rogers, Minister of Labour, made a brilliant two-hours speech in support of the bill. A noticeable improvement in economic conditions in the last year does not efface the fact that the problem is unsolved. Mr. Rogers admitted. The relief figures for February in the last four years show little variation. In 1933 the figure was 1,533,842, while this year in February the total unemployed numbered 1,310,423, causing an almost insupportable relief burden which bears heavily on the taxpayers.

The Minister of Labour gave the number of employable persons, with their dependents, as 330,940, or 67.37% of those receiving relief and as to age the largest group of employable recipients of relief are between 21 and 30 years of age. I was astonished to hear that 6,728 farm families are on relief in the

province of Ontario in January, 1936.

Employers who take advantage of the existing situation to pay wages below the worth of the work done were denounced by the Minister of Labour. The Government, he said, is entitled to use their weapon of publicity to the fullest possible extent in order to brand such action as high treason to the state in time of great emergency. Several speakers after him pointed out that publicity was mild punishment for high treason.

In concluding his lengthy speech, Mr. Rogers, referred to Edmund Burke's description of the State as "a partnership of the dead, the living and the yet unborn." "The knowledge of that partnership in the State compels us to recognize a dual responsibility which embraces to-morrow as well as to-day. Our first and immediate duty is to the living but it would be a repudiation of responsible statesmanship to forget those who some day will stand in the places in which we are to-day", said Mr. Rogers.

The Prime Minister announced just before adjournment on Friday night that fifty million dollars are to be voted for relief and public works. In doing so the Prime Minister pointed out that Canada faces the greatest emergency in its history and said that while the government would welcome all in the way of necessary criticism so long as it is fair and just, he asked each member of the House to aid in the seeking of a solution by constructive suggestions. He added that if a member was not able to do this "it may be equally helpful to remain silent." One might possibly add, however, that these were not always his opinions when he lead the opposition.

The committees have scarcely got under way, leaving the bulk of the work to be done by them after the Easter recess which, with budget and many pieces of major legislation yet to be dealt with, gives little promise of an adjournment before the end of June.

AGNES MACPHAIL

STRATHAVON

Syrup making is a slow process this year.

Mr. and Mrs. Alex. Gardner and family of Walters Falls spent the week-end with the Nigh family.

Mr. Art. Torrie is spending a week with relatives in Toronto.

Mr. Stan. Gurgler of Owen Sound is engaged with Mr. Ian Torrie for several months.

Mr. and Mrs. Carson McKessock and children spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Ramage.

Buzzing wood is the order of the day.

Mr. Geo. Morrison had the misfortune to lose a valuable horse with distemper.

Mrs. Art. Torrie and Clayton spent a few days with Mr. and Mrs. P. McLaughlan at Arnott.

Mr. Russell Tribble is engaged with Mr. Carson McKessock.

Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Brown and family of Hoath Head spent a day with Mrs. Brown's mother, Mrs. I. Nigh.



Saugeen Lodge No. 327
Markdale, Ont.

MONDAY, APRIL 20—Regular meeting for general business.
PRESTON YORK, Noble Grand
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DENTISTRY

G. CAMPBELL, L.D.S., D.D.S., Dental Surgeon. Graduate of Ontario College of Dentistry and University of Toronto. Office over the Post Office. Office hours 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Appointments made by phone.

DR. J. A. MCARTHUR, Dentist. Office in the Artley Block, over the Perkins hardware store. Entrance at south-west corner of building, Toronto Street.

FRATERNAL

L. O. L.—Markdale L.O.L. No. 1045 meets in the Orange Hall, Markdale, at 8 o'clock p.m., the first Thursday in each month. Visiting brethren cordially invited. J. W. Stoddart, W.M.; A. E. Scott, Rec.-Sec.

A. F. & A. M.—Hiram Lodge No. 490, G.R.C., Markdale, meets in the Masonic Hall, Reburn Block, at 8 o'clock p.m., on the second Thursday in each month. Visiting brethren cordially invited. W. J. Halbert, W.M.; A. E. Colgan, Sec.

R. B. K.—Victoria Preceptory No. 282 meets in the Orange Hall, Markdale, at 8 o'clock p.m., the third Thursday in each month. Visiting brethren always cordially welcome. G. W. Littlejohns, W. P.; A. E. Colgan, Registrar.

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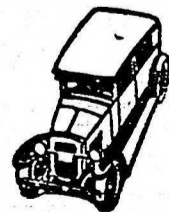
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