

years ago by Sir James Whitney, and which had been the Conservative policy ever since.

Referring to Mr. Marshall's expressions of sympathy with the Hydro-electric movement, the member for London regretted they could not lead themselves to believe that the Liberal party always held the opinions expressed by the member for Monck. When the Hydro-electric policy was first proposed the leader of the Liberal party in Ontario had declared they were interfering with vested rights. "He favored vesting the water powers of Ontario in the hands of friends, maybe," proceeded Mr. Beck, "or at all events in companies he had created at Niagara Falls. The Ross Government had refused point blank the application of the city of Toronto for permission to generate power at Niagara Falls, and had given it to the Electrical Development Company." Likewise Liberal members of the Dominion Government had granted leases to an eastern Ontario monopoly which might prevent the Hydro-electric Power Commission from extending its lines into that section of the Province. They had given away Chats Falls for \$1,400, when, at the purchaser's own valuation, it was worth \$3,000,000.

#### Aid From Liberal Press.

Continuing, Mr. Beck said they appreciated the kind words of Mr. Marshall to-day, but there had been a day when they might have been more helpful. He was grateful for the support of the movement by the Liberal press. The Globe had endorsed many features of the project.

Referring to the control of water powers, he said the Government under the leases recently issued has absolute control of the water powers of the Province. "The practice of handing them out to friends of the Government has long been discontinued."

To illustrate the growth of the undertaking, Mr. Beck said they had begun with thirteen municipalities as customers; now they were supplying forty-one, thirteen of which were police villages and rural municipalities. Information, estimates and other data had been furnished by the Commission's engineers to one hundred and four villages and hamlets and thirty-nine townships. They had completed the construction of 280 miles of high-tension transmission lines and 246 of low-tension lines in the Niagara district, 71 in the St. Lawrence district, and seven in the Port Arthur district, and they were about to build 42 miles more in the Niagara district, 84 in the St. Lawrence district, 53 miles around Windsor, Sarnia and Goderich, and several in the Port Arthur district. Politics had prevented them from extending their lines into the Owen Sound and eastern Ontario districts.

Dealing with the plans outlined to meet the needs of the farmers, Mr. Beck said the Commission had spent considerable money making experiments and demonstrating to the farmers what work the Hydro-electric was capable of doing on the farm. It was now up to the farmers to become co-partners in the scheme and thus assist in a further reduction of prices. The more customers the Commission had the lower the prices would be. Mr. Beck then moved the amendment to Mr. Marshall's motion.

#### Not a Party Question.

Dr. McQueen (North Wentworth) believed every citizen of Ontario realized that the Hydro-electric movement was a splendid thing, and that it was owned and operated by and for the people. He did not agree, however, that the idea was originated by any political party, and in reference to a statement by Mr. Beck to the effect that some of the Liberal newspapers had not been in sympathy with the movement, he pointed out that Tory papers also had criticized it. The Hamilton Spectator especially having been consistently and strongly opposed to the scheme since its inception.

#### What the Liberals Have Done.

Mr. N. W. Rowell quoted from the journals of the House to show that the late Liberal Government was responsible for the legislation that conserved the waterpowers of the Province. The leader of the Opposition then showed that the Hydro-electric power movement originated at a meeting held in the city of Toronto in 1900, when the question was taken up by the Toronto Board Trade, and Mr. W. E. H. Massey was made

Chairman of the Board of Trade committee appointed to look into the whole matter. Following that a meeting of the manufacturers of mid-western Ontario was held in Berlin, Ont., to confer on the best method of securing power from Niagara Falls.

According to the "Genesis of the Power Movement," a booklet issued by the Ontario Hydro-electric Power Commission, ex-Controller F. S. Spence of Toronto was the chief speaker at the meeting, and advocated the appointment of a Government Commission, which would have power to construct and operate a line for the transmission of Niagara power to the various municipalities desiring it. It was that policy that was now being carried out in the Province of Ontario. At a subsequent meeting in Berlin all three members of a committee appointed happened to be Liberals, and in 1903 former Mayor Urquhart, a prominent Toronto Liberal, had been made Chairman of a committee that sent a deputation to wait upon the Government, which appointed a commission to deal with the matter.

Mr. Beck's first official relation to the Commission came as a result of a bill passed by the late Liberal Government, Mr. Rowell pointed out. That act eventually proved inadequate and the one now on the statute books was passed by the present Government.

#### A Great Public Trust.

"The Hydro-electric Commission was not party in its origin. It sprang from the people, and to-day it is a great trust for the benefit of the people. It is a good thing, its policy is a good one, and we desire to see it carried out," said Mr. Rowell.

The Opposition leader challenged the statement of Mr. Beck that the Liberal party had not supported the Hydro-electric by pointing to the objection which the Liberal party took at the last election to transfer the Hydro-electric from the Commission to a department of the Government, which was in accordance with Mr. Beck's own view of what was best in the interest of the work.

"What I said," replied Mr. Beck, "was that I cannot recall a single instance where a Liberal member of this House or a Liberal ex-member ever appeared on a public platform when there was a controversy between the public interest and a public undertaking and a corporate interest."

There was a proposal in December, 1911, continued the Opposition leader, to transfer the Hydro-electric from the Commission to a department of the Government, which was resisted by the Opposition. That attitude was in accordance with Mr. Beck's position at the time.

#### The Government Divided.

Again Mr. Rowell charged the Government with not being unanimous on the proposed extensions of the Hydro-electric to rural communities and the application of the scheme to rural railways. Mr. Beck had made it clear that the Government was not prepared to act, and the best answer he could give was that the House would have to wait and see what the Government decided to do.

"No one but the merest tyro in constitutional knowledge will ask the question whether the leader of a Government was behind his colleagues on anything that they proposed," said Sir James Whitney.

"In most cases, Mr. Speaker, I would be persuaded to accept that as a good constitutional principle. But we have had so many exhibitions in connection with this Government where the colleagues of the Prime Minister have had a policy that he has not been behind that I hesitate to accept the Prime Minister's doctrine," answered Mr. Rowell. He instanced the assurance given by Mr. Hanna to the special assessment committee that some movement towards tax reform would be taken up by the Government, and later that the municipal franchise would be extended to married women under certain conditions, both of which were rejected by the Prime Minister as being unworthy of consideration.

"Both statements are untrue," interrupted Sir James.

"Well, the members of the House heard them and they can put their ears against the statement of the Prime Minister," continued Mr. Rowell. "Under the circumstances the members of the Opposition were justified in asking when the Prime Minister was behind his colleagues."