

NO INVESTIGATION OF RURAL CONDITIONS

Government Rejects Resolution of Mr. Mayberry

DEBATE IN LEGISLATURE

Member for South Oxford Shows an
Alarming State of Affairs — Hon.
Mr. Duff Glad Ontario is Populating
the West.

Another attempt to shoulder blame upon the Dominion Government for Provincial negligence was witnessed in the Legislature last evening, when the Government negatived the resolution of Mr. Mayberry (South Oxford) for an investigation into the causes of rural depopulation.

The member for South Oxford moved the resolution: "That in view of the alarming decrease of approximately 100,000 in the rural population in the counties of old Ontario, during the period of ten years, as disclosed by the Dominion census of 1911; and in view of the general scarcity of farm labor throughout Ontario, which for some years past has caused grave concern to the farmers of the Province, and has resulted in a material diminution in the agricultural production of the Province, this House is of the opinion that a select committee of the House or a Commission of practical men should be appointed to inquire into the whole situation and report as to what means can be taken to remedy or improve existing conditions."

The problem of securing sufficient farm labor was most serious, said Mr. Mayberry. He agreed with the statement of the late Deputy Minister of Agriculture that the farm production of Ontario could be increased 100 per cent. if proper methods were employed. It was one thing to give such advice and another thing to carry it out under existing labor conditions. Farming was the most undermanned industry in the Province to-day. Although farm products never brought such a high price, never were so many farms for sale. The adoption of electricity and labor-saving machinery had produced little or no results to solve the problem. Dairymen were not increasing their herds, because adequate labor was unobtainable.

Work for the Government.

Another loss to the rural districts was that the men who were taking the places of those that went to the cities or the west were inexperienced in Ontario farming methods. The average immigrant was totally inexperienced. As long as bonuses were paid to societies to bring out immigrants it mattered little what the regulations were. Results would be much more satisfactory if the Government took up direct immigration work itself. That the farmers were not satisfied with the methods of the department was proven by the fact that Grey county had sent its own representative to England to bring out one hundred farm laborers. If it was advisable for the farmers to do this, it was desirable that the Government should appoint practical men who knew their business to assist immigration.

Hon. James S. Duff spoke briefly. He pointed out that there was a shortage in all trades, and declared that the Government had been unceasing in its efforts to procure immi-

grants. He objected to the unfairness of the resolution, which said that the rural decline had been 100,000 in the last ten years; as a matter of fact, it had only been 52,000. Mr. Duff thought it was a matter of pride that Ontario's loss should have resulted in such a gain to the west.

Mr. Allan Studholme (East Hamilton) criticized the methods of the department for failing to keep track of the immigrants. Little or nothing was known of the people that came out, while the Salvation Army and other organizations were able to keep trace of their people for years.

Mr. McDonald's Amendment.

An amendment to that moved by Mr. Duff was brought in by Mr. Wm. McDonald (Centre Bruce), quoting the terms of Mr. J. W. Flavelle's famous letter to the Minister of Agriculture:

"This House expresses the earnest hope that the Government will take active measures to cope with the situation, so that the Minister of Agriculture will no longer be open to the grave charge that 'You have permitted, you are now permitting, thousands of young Ontario farmers, the cream of our agricultural people, to leave their own Province for the west, while by your inertia you indicate you are not cognizant of the advantages of continued residence in this Province, if full advantage is taken of the opportunities which open in response to intelligent effort.'"

THE LIQUOR LICENSE AMENDMENT ACT.

The Provincial Secretary secured yesterday from the Legislative Assembly a second reading for his insignificant bill amending the Liquor License Act of the Province. He made no speech in moving the second reading, and no other member on the Government side made any reply to the spirited protests and appeals put up by members of the Opposition. This was in accordance with the practice of the Ministerial majority for some weeks past. Challenges from the other side are ignored and arguments go uncontested. There is apparently a concerted purpose in this policy of silence, but the effect of it on the public mind is naturally to create the impression that arguments are allowed to go unrefuted because there is no refutation available.

Mr. Proudfoot rallied the Government, and especially the Premier, on their failure to make any attempt at redeeming their pledge to bring in this session a bill to prohibit treating. Sir James Whitney takes notice of such an attack only to make a general eulogy on his Government's record for excellent administration of the license law, and yet just a day earlier Mr. Hanna admitted that liquor was habitually and illegally sold on railway trains and steamboats with the knowledge and therefore the connivance of the Government, and that the "blind-pig" traffic in Northern Ontario is beyond the power of the Government to suppress.

Mr. Sam Clarke gave the Provincial Secretary a bad quarter of an hour on his attempt to shorten the drinking day by cutting off the hours from six to eight in the morning, when very little drinking is done, instead of the hours from nine to eleven at night, when the bars are all running full blast with the throttle open. Mr. McDonald expressed his approval of the amendments as an installment of a reform long overdue, but regretted it was so little. Mr. Rowell closed the debate with a reasoned and forcible appeal to the Government not to disappoint temperance reformers with so insignificant a measure after promising so much last session. To all these speeches on the subject the Premier turned a deaf ear, and his well-disciplined followers showed themselves ill at ease but afraid to hit back.