

NEW SCHOOL BILL STORM CENTRE IN LEGISLATURE

Allan Studholme Starts Rumpus by Proposal to Raise Compulsory Attendance Age—Opposition Members Clash

Hon. Dr. Cody's bill to change the method of enforcing attendance in the elementary schools of Ontario had a rough passage in committee in the Legislature yesterday. All measures that affect the education of the children are watched very closely. While this particular bill had not generally been looked upon as one which would cause any prolonged debate, a tempest blew up rapidly when the Labor member, Mr. Allan Studholme of East Hamilton, moved a resolution, while the House was in committee, proposing to raise the compulsory school age from fourteen to sixteen. The Minister of Education refused to have anything to do with the amendment. He said that the question raised by the East Hamilton member was not covered by the School Attendance Bill, but by the Adolescent School Age Bill, which might be brought down at this session. Before the debate concluded half a dozen members took part in it, and the House had divided on Mr. Studholme's amendment, and also on an amendment by Mr. Sam Carter of South Wellington, proposing to raise the age to fifteen years. Only the movers of the amendments supported them when the vote was taken.

With the exception of the debate on this one bill there was no prolonged discussion yesterday. It was a day of hard work. In the absence of the Prime Minister, Sir William Hearst, who was slightly indisposed, the Attorney-General, Hon. I. B. Lucas, led the House. He succeeded in getting a large number of measures advanced a stage. Several Government bills were passed through committee after but a short discussion, and a number of others were given second reading. Hon. Mr. Macdiarmid's bill to amend the Ontario Highways Act brought forward the suggestion from Mr. J. C. Elliott (West Middlesex) that the Government should share forty per cent. of the cost of maintaining a county road. Under the present act the Government contributes forty per cent. to the cost of construction of roads in county systems and twenty per cent. of the cost of maintenance. The Minister agreed there was some merit for the suggestion and will take the matter under advisement.

Opposition Applies Spur.

Certain phases of the Legislature's business have been lagging too much to suit the Opposition. With the end of the session a week away, and the knowledge that if information they have asked for is not forthcoming at once it will be of little use to them when the Government does bring it down, Mr. William Proudfoot, K.C., the Liberal Leader, before the orders of the day were called, drew the attention of the Attorney-General to the fact that a number of resolutions were still standing on the order paper; also that a number of promised returns had not been brought down. Mr. H. Hartley Dewart, K.C., backed him up in this, by inquiring for certain information he had requested some time ago. The Ministers promised to hurry the information along.

Mr. William McDonald, the North

Bruce Liberal, urged upon the Government the importance of practising economy by consolidating the county jails. He had a bill before this House proposing the necessary amendments to the act, but after achieving his purpose of bringing the matter to the attention of the Ministers, he accepted the Provincial Secretary's suggestion and withdrew it. Mr. McDonald pointed out that there are some jails, according to the Government report, in which only one or two prisoners were being detained at the end of 1917. There were consolidated schools, the number of County Judges was being reduced, and it was only right that one county should be allowed to make an agreement with another county, if it so desired, to have the other county look after its prisoners.

Mr. Proudfoot supported Mr. McDonald in his plea for economy. He recognized that it was a difficult problem, but the bill to reduce the number of Judges showed that the Government was considering the matter.

May Reduce County Jails.

The Provincial Secretary said that the whole subject was one that required most careful consideration. The session was too far advanced to permit of the matter being given the attention that it required. Just before Mr. McDonald withdrew the bill, however, he secured a promise from the Attorney-General that when the reduction in the number of Judges was being made the reduction of county jails would also be considered.

Mr. J. C. Elliott pointed out that under a clause of the act it is possible if for a period of two years there are only an average of four persons in a jail to secure permission from the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to permit of an agreement being made with another county to care for those prisoners. He suggested that the number be raised to partially meet with Mr. McDonald's objection.

The storm over clauses of the School Attendance Act was between members of the Opposition, Mr. Studholme and the Minister of Education, but chiefly between the former. The Labor member objected to the school age being fourteen when the bill was given its second reading on Wednesday. Notwithstanding the explanation of Dr. Cody at that time he put up a strenuous fight yesterday to prevent the clause being passed without amendment. But he fought an almost lone fight. When he could not get his amendment accepted at once, he asked that the clause be allowed to stand over, pending the bringing down of the Adolescent School Attendance Act, which the Minister had referred to. He was backed up in this by Mr. Carter and Mr. Dewart.

Mr. Carter declared that what he wanted was the curriculum of the elementary schools pulled up by the roots and changed so as to give children a better education up to sixteen years in such institutions.

Dr. Cody pointed out that raising the age to sixteen was dealt with under the Adolescent School Age Act, and not by the bill under discussion. Questioned by Major J. C. Tolmie (Windsor) as to whether the act mentioned contemplated making attendance at school compulsory up to the age of sixteen, the Minister stated that the proposed bill had been drafted. He admitted he had in view making attendance compulsory up to sixteen years of age, and part time education between sixteen and eighteen.

Mr. Thomas Marshall (Lincoln), the recognized educational critic of the Opposition, did not see any object in pressing the question raised by Mr. Studholme at that time. The Minister had promised the matter would be dealt with under the proposed bill, and that ought to be sufficient. Mr. William McDonald joined him in this. He could see no use