

NO INFORMATION TO HOUSE AS TO ROUTE OF HIGHWAY

Government Votes Down Amendment Calling for Details Before Money is Granted

Liberals in the Legislature yesterday urged the Government to furnish the House with information as to the proposed route of the entire Provincial highway, the plans and specifications of the various sections of it and an estimate of the cost of the different portions of the thoroughfare. They urged that consideration of a resolution, which was before the House in committee, setting aside \$5,000,000 to be used for the improvement of public highways, be deferred until after this information had been supplied. When their counsel was not heeded in debate, Mr. J. C. Elliott of West Middlesex incorporated the demand in an amendment. Government supporters, however, following the lead given by the Minister of Public Works, Hon. Finlay C. Macdiarmid, defeated the amendment and carried the resolution. Subsequently a bill to amend the Ontario Highways Act, based on the resolution, was introduced by Mr. Macdiarmid. The Opposition Leader, Mr. Proudfoot, hinted that more would be heard from the Liberals on the second reading of the bill.

The resolution seemed to be on the verge of slipping through without a question being raised, when Mr. Elliott asked if the Government had decided on the route of the Provincial highway west of London. He urged that this information should be given before the resolution was passed.

The Minister of Public Works replied that the route west of London had not been decided upon.

House Entitled to Know

Mr. Elliott replied that the House was entitled to considerably more information than it had at the present time before it should be expected to pass the resolution. He strongly urged that the Government should do more to assist the people in the back townships building suitable market roads. They would be in addition to the present county road system. He believed the rural district in the past had had to shoulder too great a burden in connection with the highways, although he agreed with the policy of the Provincial highway. Mr. Elliott referred to the road policy of New York State, and quoted from their annual reports to show the assistance given there. He pointed out they had township roads, which were what he styled as market roads in this Province.

Replying to the criticism of the West Middlesex member, Mr. Macdiarmid said that the resolution did not apply only to the Provincial highway, but it also included statutory obligations under the Highways Improvement Act.

Ascertaining Costs.

"We have now reached the period when it is desirable that the enterprise should be carried on," declared the Minister. "The undertaking should be proceeded with along sound business lines, not with a view to constructing the whole route in one year. It is, as I have said before, difficult to furnish detailed information with regard to the exact cost with any particular type of highway. The location, the length of the whole, the width of the road—all these enter into determining the cost. So it is very difficult for us to say just what any particular mile of road will cost until that mile is constructed. We know in a general way that a concrete road, built under favorable conditions, 15 feet in width, cost \$18,000 a mile in Essex last year. The next mile would probably cost

more because of a longer haul."

Mr. Macdiarmid said that a macadam road would probably cost about \$9,000 a mile, and a gravel road between \$3,000 and \$5,000 a mile. Referring again to the route of the highway, the Minister said that the Prime Minister had promised to secure all the facts before making an announcement as to the district the road would follow. All this information had not yet been secured. It was not a matter that he himself decided, but it was a question upon which the Government as a whole came to a decision. The type of the road must be suitable to the traffic that is going to pass over it. Possibly 200 miles of the highway will be a pavement or some other permanent construction, possibly 175 miles will be of macadam. The balance of the road, in his opinion, should be of gravel. The construction of the road is not to be pushed ahead and finished in ninety days, but the program will extend over several years, probably five.

The Dominion Grant.

While there had been some talk of the proposed Dominion grant not being forthcoming, he had no information on the matter. It had been said they would pay about 40 per cent. of the cost, and he trusted that would be true. The more the Dominion Government grants, the less the counties will have to pay, probably not more than 15 per cent. of the cost.

Replying to another question, Mr. Macdiarmid said that each county would probably spend about \$100,000 on good roads, or \$3,700,000 in all, there being 37 counties in the scheme. The Province's share would be about 50 per cent., or \$1,800,000, out of the \$5,000,000.

Mr. Proudfoot joined in urging that the Government had to give the House more information. Surely it was not the intention of the Government, he said, to pay as much per mile for constructing the 200 miles of concrete as it cost to build the Toronto and Hamilton highway. "If so it is going to be a very serious undertaking," he declared.

Half a dozen members took part in the debate before it concluded, including Hon. George S. Henry, Mr. J. W. Widdifield of North Ontario, Mr. Sam Carter of South Wellington, Mr. Wm. McDonald of North Bruce, and Mr. Beniah Bowman of Manitoulin.

Salary Instead of Fees.

A resolution of Mr. Wm. McDonald caused an interesting discussion, which terminated when the member for North Bruce withdrew his motion at the request of Hon. I. B. Lucas. It expressed the opinion that County Crown Attorneys, Registrars and Sheriffs should be paid a salary in lieu of the present system of fees.

The Attorney-General said he was inclined to agree with Mr. McDonald that Crown Attorneys should be on a salary. However, there were many difficulties which stood in the way, and he enumerated them. They included that if an official was not paid by fees he might be inclined to get lazy. Nor did he think the commutation system, as suggested by the mover of the resolution, would be a success. Nor did the Attorney-General think the positions of Registrars in different counties could be amalgamated, as there is considerable jealousy in the different counties over such positions.

Mr. Proudfoot disagreed with the Attorney-General. He thought the Crown Attorneys could very well be paid by salaries. The fees could be turned into the Province, and the officials could be paid jointly by the counties and the Government. It was not so important to pay the Sheriffs and the Registrars by salary as it was the Crown Attorneys.