

FIXING OF FARES IS UNPOPULAR

Municipalities Send Deputation in Protest to Premier Drury

REGARD FOR CONTRACTS

Premier Drury gave definite assurance yesterday that the municipalities of Ontario need not worry over the McCrea Bill. To a deputation from cities represented in the Hydro-radial Association the Premier said he would be unwilling to do anything that would lend itself to the breaking of contracts.

The deputation met the Premier after two hours' discussion of the McCrea Bill at the City Hall, when the following resolution was adopted:

Utterly Opposed to Bill.

"That this meeting of representatives of municipalities from Windsor to Ottawa desire to place ourselves on record as utterly opposed to Bill No. 189, entitled an Act to Amend the Ontario Railway Act.

"This bill was opposed by our association last year, at the request of the municipalities, as being a direct violation of municipal rights.

"We desire to renew and reaffirm our opposition, as this bill would place the people and the municipalities at the mercy of the Ontario Railway and Municipal Board and the private companies, and would wipe out the terms of our contract, while allowing franchises to stand.

"We, therefore, petition the Honorable the Prime Minister and the Government to oppose the said bill as being against the interests of the people of Ontario."

Regulation of Fares.

J. W. Lyon, President of the association, said the effect of the McCrea Bill, giving power to the Railway Board to order a change in fares, would be that they would be revised only one way, namely, upward. The claim of private companies that they could not give a satisfactory service or pay a reasonable return on the investment might be a reason to discuss a change by mutual agreement, but it constituted no ground for arbitrary legislative action.

When Hydro-radials were built, it would turn over to the Railway Board the right to fix fares on these efficiently managed lines, and deprive the Hydro-electric Power Commission of the very principle on which public ownership had been successful—service at cost.

Sir Adam's Views.

Sir Adam Beck told the gathering that prior to 1909 any Municipal Council had power to vary an agreement without a vote of the people. In the city of London a circumstance arose where this was attempted, but he fought it.

He pointed out that in Windsor last year the Railway Board proposed to increase the fares, but this was voted down by the people. The largest majorities against the increase were in districts where the working men lived, who were on strike for more money. Although the Railway Board said the old rates could not be continued and wages increased, under Hydro management increases had been granted, the old fares were maintained, and the system was paying all its debts. If the Railway Board had increased the fares the city of Windsor would have had difficulty in buying the road.

Mayor's Protest.

Mayor Church said that in the

days of Sir James Whitney legislation such as the McCrea Bill would be kicked out. If the McCrea Bill and the \$2 power tax were passed Toronto would not go ahead with its part of the clean-up.

Ald. John Bridge of London remarked that the legislation would affect that city in its probable acquirement of the street railway system. The added revenue from increased fares would be put into equipment, and when the road was valued this would have to be paid for again.

Premier Perplexed.

The Premier admitted that he had been unable to acquaint himself with the provisions of the bill. He could see grave dangers if authority were delegated to cancel contracts. Neither was he prepared to favor legislation which would permit Municipal Councils to consent to franchise contracts being varied. Unfortunately Municipal Councils might be susceptible to influences which might not be in the interests of the citizens. He wondered if there was a complementary feature under which the companies would refund money to reduce fares if the earnings were excessive.

A resolution of condolence was passed with Controller Maguire, Vice-President of the association, in his recent bereavement.

TAX ON POOLROOMS IS THOUGHT UNFAIR

Municipalities Would Confer With Province and Arrange Plan

Urging that a conference with the various municipalities should be called to develop a co-ordinate policy of local and Provincial taxation in connection with the levy on pool and billiard rooms, an open letter has been sent to Premier Drury by the Bureau of Municipal Research. In the act to license billiard and pool rooms and bowling alleys, which has been introduced by Hon. Peter Smith, there are certain serious abridgments of the rights and interests of municipal corporations, the letter states.

As the license fees of billiard and pool rooms and bowling alleys have been a source of revenue for municipalities, the enactment of the present bill, it is stated, places in the hands of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council the power to abolish this revenue. The letter recognizes that the regulation of pool and billiard rooms is a serious problem, but says that a Provincial tax on pool and billiard rooms would be penalizing the urban municipalities, where this business is largely centred, for the benefit of the Province at large.

Timber Probe Witness is Now Quarantined

E. J. Callighan, Fort Frances, who was summoned to appear yesterday before the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislature in connection with Hon. G. Howard Ferguson's examination of timber probe witnesses, is ill and will be unable to leave home for six weeks.

H. H. Dewart, K.C., yesterday produced medical certificates to the effect that Mr. Callighan was quarantined on March 14 on account of scarlet fever. Under these circumstances examination of Mr. Callighan cannot proceed during the present