

TRY TO FORCE MR. FERGUSON TO PRODUCE ALL LETTERS TAKEN FROM DEPARTMENT

New Angle Revealed to Timber Probe in Course of Angry Debate in Legislature — Letters Are Claimed to be Private by Ex-Secretary

**THE SPEAKER HAS
A BUSY EVENING**

Attorney-General Emphatic in His Suggestion That Public Documents Had Been Burned or Carried Away — Heated Debate and Angry Words Are Passed

Plainly to be drawn from the spirited debate in the Legislature yesterday afternoon and evening on Premier Drury's bill to amend the Public Inquiries Act was the inference that the Provincial Government intends to take legal action to recover from Hon. G. H. Ferguson, ex-Minister of Lands, Forests and Mines, the files of letters, claimed by him to be private, which were removed from the department by his Secretary, C. C. Hele, after the defeat of the Conservative Government.

The bill, which seeks to release the timber probe from the injunction proceedings brought by the Spanish River Pulp & Paper Company, raised for the fourth or fifth time during the session the whole question of the Timber Commission, and the old invectives and old arguments against its status and jurisdiction were revamped at considerable length.

New Feature Introduced.

The decidedly new feature in yesterday's debate was the attitude of the Attorney-General in throwing the spotlight upon evidence taken at the Public Accounts Committee concerning the removal of 25 or 30 files and the burning of many other letters.

Hon. Mr. Raney told the House, in forceful language, that he linked up with the subpoena proceedings for the production of that correspondence before the commission the injunction proceedings of the Spanish River Pulp & Paper Company to halt the whole proceedings of the Royal Commission.

Reading at length from Mr. Hele's evidence before the commission, the Attorney-General pointed out that the ex-Secretary of the department had steadfastly refused to allow any person to go over the files, among which were letters relating to pulp, to complaints against departmental administration, and anything that might be deemed by himself or the Minister to be private. The Attorney-General pointed out that apparently Mr. Hele had studied the Criminal Code on the subject, for he said he had read that particular section which had reference to a term

of 14 years' imprisonment.

Debate Grows Heated.

"Well, why don't you lock him up?" queried Hon. Mr. Ferguson from across the floor.

Hon. Mr. Raney—I am not saying anything about that at present.

Acrimonious cross-floor debates between the Attorney-General and the Leader of the Conservative party and his followers were frequent. Hon. Mr. Ferguson, having taken objection on numerous occasions to the unfair insinuations which, he said, the Attorney-General had thrown out during his lengthy reading of Timber Commission evidence, declared in his speech that for an hour and a half the Attorney-General had done nothing but seek to "contort and discolor the whole situation," a remark which Hon. Mr. Raney demanded be withdrawn.

Says Public Papers Gone.

The Attorney-General had no sooner commenced his speech than Hon. Mr. Ferguson arose with the indignant demand as to whether he suggested that anything had been burned or carried away from the Department of Lands, Forests and

Mines that was in any way a public document.

"Yes," answered Hon. Mr. Raney.

Hon. Mr. Ferguson—I say the Attorney-General is saying something absolutely without foundation, and I believe he knows it is absolutely without foundation.

Later the Conservative Leader wrathfully protested against the term "rifling the department." The Attorney-General, he said, had no right to make such a statement, and when both members of the House endeavored to elucidate the point at once the Conservative Leader cautioned, "Now just a moment, Mr. Attorney-General, you get too cocky sometimes." The point was wrangled over at some length, and finally the Speaker ruled the term unparliamentary.

"Abstracted" was the next term to which Hon. Mr. Ferguson took objection. "Let the Attorney-General," he said, "go outside the House and make that statement and I will give him an opportunity of showing the public whether it is true or not." Again Mr. Speaker was called upon to rule out the reference, and the ruling was no sooner given than J. W. Curry offered his assistance to the Attorney-General by raising a point of order against Hon. Mr. Ferguson's reference to "pettifogging member" directed against the Attorney-General.

Hon. G. H. Henry demanded to know if the Attorney-General construed a Minister's right to take away his private correspondence as "tampering with the files." Hon. Mr. Raney characterized the question as "too ridiculous to answer," and the ex-Minister of Agriculture's effort to thrash the thing out across the floor was drowned by the cries of "Order" from U.F.O. members.

Says It's Not Private.

"Does not all this correspondence," asked R. R. Hall, "deal with the public domain, and is it not in consequence public? Why does the Attorney-General refer to it as private?"

Hon. Mr. Raney—I do not say it is private. They say it is private. I do not know whether anything of this kind has taken place in the history of this country or any other country. Mr. Hele, I understand, is still actively engaged in representing the Conservative section of this House on occasion.

Hon. Mr. Raney denounced the injunction proceedings of the Spanish River Company as an effort to stave off the demand of the Timber Commission for production of the "private" Ferguson corres-