

TRUCKS PROBE GETTING WARM

Roy Reynolds Subjected to Long and Searching Examination

TALK OF "BONUS," "GIFT"

Roy Reynolds of Dundas, upon whose evidence last week before the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislature rested allegations of irregularities in Governmental purchases of motor trucks, appeared again yesterday before the committee. An attempt by R. L. Brackin to introduce matter reflecting upon the credibility of the witness resulted in prolonged legal debate, Chairman J. W. Curry deeming it his duty to enforce the strict rules of evidence. Reynolds hotly referred to portions of the disputed evidence as a "frame-up" against him and withdrew none of his former statements before the committee.

A dramatic turn was given to the morning's proceedings when Chas. McCrea, representing the Opposition in examination, charged that "two detectives who have been trailing Reynolds" were in the room. The member for Sudbury demanded their withdrawal, upon which the Chairman asked two of the witnesses summoned by Mr. Brackin to retire to the corridors.

Reviews Reynolds' Evidence.

Making specific reference to Reynolds' indirect imputations against the Minister of Public Works, as contained in evidence at his former appearance, Mr. Brackin produced a copy of testimony given by the same witness on the occasion of his suit against Parkins, his former employer. This, Mr. Brackin held, was to the effect that on Saturday, March 6, 1920, Reynolds and Parkins had not discussed the specific nature "of an alleged gift" or commission, whereas in his evidence before the Public Accounts Committee the witness had told of definite discussion with Parkins on that date regarding the relative merits of a \$3,000 "bonus" and the "gift" of a McLaughlin automobile.

W. A. McLean explained his connection, as Deputy Minister of Highways, with the \$117,000 purchase of Sterling trucks. Replying to a question by Mr. McCrea as to whether the methods pursued by the department in this purchase had been "in the public interest," Mr. McLean stated that, in his opinion, they were so, under the circumstances that prevailed. This reply was given following the action of the committee in overruling the Chairman, who had held the question to be improper and inadmissible.

Thought Parkins Would Tender.

The Deputy Minister said that he could recall no exact date upon which a conclusion to use Sterling trucks had been reached by the department. He had expected a tender from Parkins, he thought, though he could not say definitely as to this.

Mr. McCrea—Where did you get information that led you to think Parkins would make a tender?

Mr. McLean—As I recall it, Mr. Biggs had asked me if the trucks could be bought as satisfactorily outside the city of Toronto as in the city, and I said that, under then existing circumstances, I believed they could. Something was said as to a local dealer, who, I think, probably was Parkins.

The Minister, Mr. McLean said, was in no way responsible, that no written report had been made in connection with this purchase; as Deputy, he had recommended the purchase on the advice of Chief

class of business in the public interest?

Mr. Curry—I rule that question to be improper.

Mr. McCrea—I appeal to the Prime Minister, if he is here—

Mr. Curry—The Prime Minister is not here, and if he were, he is not Chairman of this committee. If you don't like the ruling you may appeal it.

Chair is Not Sustained.

The ruling was appealed, and the Chair was not sustained. The question then being put a second time, Mr. McLean replied at length, stating that when the order was placed trade conditions were abnormal, prices were rising, and urgent action was imperative; so much so that, in his opinion, it was in the public interest to purchase on list prices, without calling for tenders.

Mr. Curry—That is not an answer to the question.

Mr. McLean (following another presentation of the question)—Yes, in the public interest.

When Reynolds took the stand, Mr. McCrea made his reference to "two detectives," and at the Chairman's order Messrs. Woodsworth and Mathews, two witnesses awaiting call by Mr. Brackin, left the room.

For the better part of an hour Mr. Brackin examined the witness in an effort to secure from him an admission as to discrepancy between his evidence in the Reynolds-Parkins case and his evidence, on the same point, before the committee. In effect the evidence of Reynolds in the former instance was that, on the day of his final conversation with Parkins as to his share of commissions on sales of trucks, from the Parkins garage, no mention had been made as to the specific nature of an alleged "gift" to the Minister of Public Works, whereas, a week ago, Reynolds gave details regarding discussion on the date referred to as to a McLaughlin car and a cash bonus.

Witness Holds to Statement.

Close questioning failed to shake the witness, who explained the seeming discrepancy by declaring that, in the trial at Hamilton, he had refrained from reference to any understanding between himself and other parties.

"I was the one who kept my mouth shut!" he exclaimed warmly. "If I had been asked, I might have told. I wasn't asked that question. I kept my mouth shut."

Mr. Brackin produced a document purporting to prove, by the

statements of one of the two men ejected from the room, that Reynolds had once admitted perjuring himself in a lawsuit in which Parkins had figured, on the ground that "Parkins would swear my life away, and why shouldn't I swear his away?"—or in words to that effect. This, Reynolds declared, was a "frame-up," and absolutely untrue. It was just part of a deep plan to discredit him, he said. The Chairman objected to admission of certain documents submitted by Mr. Brackin without complete proof of authenticity. Originals, or sworn copies, Mr. Brackin assured him, would be forthcoming.

The investigation of this item in Public Accounts will be continued at the next sitting of the committee.