

G. G. Halcrow Accuses Government of Many Sins of Omission and Commission — Challenges Premier to Show Public Ownership Spirit

HYDRO AGREEMENTS MUST BE FULFILLED

Speaking for the first time from Opposition benches, George G. Halcrow (East Hamilton), former House Leader of the Labor group, criticized the Drury Government in the Legislature yesterday for its Hydro attitude, its failure to deal with the unemployment problem, its shirking of responsibility in connection with commission appointments, and the meagreness of its wage payments upon Provincial Highways.

With two speakers yesterday, Mr. Halcrow and R. R. Hall, Liberal member for Parry Sound, the Government expected that the debate would end. But Sergt.-Major McNamara, Independent Soldier member for Riverdale, is billed to go on this afternoon, and to be followed by Hon. G. S. Henry (East York). Government members, it is understood, will not make any further contribution, and the debate is now expected to end this afternoon.

Debate May Go On.

Protests yesterday from Mr. Halcrow and Mr. Hall over the rumored arrangement between Leaders to cut short the discussion, brought explanations from Hon. Mr. Ferguson (Conservative Leader) and F. Wellington Hay (Liberal Leader), before adjournment. There had been no arrangement, both Leaders agreed, except as to the first day's speaking. The debate was open after that and might continue, so far as they were concerned, at any length.

Mr. Halcrow opened his address with the remark that, although he had made some effort, he had not as yet been able to find out who was responsible for removing him from his seat behind the Government to the back row of the Opposition benches. Philosophically, however, he remarked he now felt certain restraints had been removed and he had found that the sun shone "on both sides of the fence" where he now sat.

Claims Treatment Unfair.

He felt, he said, the Labor party had not acted fairly and squarely with him in its recent actions concerning him. If the principals in that affair had been aboveboard they would have called him to appear before the Labor group to defend himself. He took his hat off to the member for Lincoln, he said, for telling them that they had not played fairly.

He told the House his belief in the recall, the first plank in the U.F.O.-Labor platform, had been sufficient to impel him to place his signed resignation in the hands of his constituents before he ever entered the House. "I want to ask

members on the other side," he said, "if they believe in the recall as honestly as I do."

The ex-Labor Leader took issue with the Drury Government upon its unemployment policy, declaring with some vigor that the Labor deputations had secured more satisfaction from Hon. Arthur Meighen when Premier than they had in their appeals before Premier Drury.

Not Sufficient Done.

In his opinion the Government of Ontario had not done sufficient in the way of meeting existing conditions. It was a shame, he said, that in any community where there were abundant resources men and women and children should have to go without the necessities of life.

Repeating some former criticisms of the Government wages on high-ways work, Mr. Halcrow denounced the 30 cents per hour rate of the department as outrageous. U.F.O. members who voted for the increase in indemnity last session, he thought, must now have troubled consciences as they contrasted that move with the remuneration being paid the road workers.

He challenged Premier Drury, despite his public ownership protestations, to point to him any instance where he had either inaugurated anything in the way of public ownership or where he had helped it along. He thought that the Government had an opportunity to put its pretenses into practice by inaugurating public ownership in timber activities. If Mr. Backus could make money out of Ontario's timber, he said, the Province itself surely could.

Repetition of History.

Mr. Halcrow offered the opinion that the day was coming, and not far off, when the same errors and the same sort of things that took place under the old regimes would take place under the Drury regime, and when that day came Mr. Drury and his followers would as quickly be turned out.

If Hydro-radials had been proceeded with, declared Mr. Halcrow, it would have been the nearest thing to a solution of the unemployment question that Ontario could have had.

The Chippawa project, he said, was entered into partially as a war measure, and had the Drury Government been in power it would have been impelled to make the move itself. "It is not fair," he said, "for the present Government to be passing the buck to the Hydro Commission and the past Government. With increased valuations and increased costs, it was only logical to expect that the proposition was going to exceed its original estimate."

Attacks Commission Report.

For every engineer that had reported unfavorably on Hydro-radials, Mr. Halcrow proceeded, one could find two who had reported favorably. After portraying Premier Drury as vacillating on the radial issue in its earlier stages, he went on to refer to certain members of the Sutherland Commission as notoriously opposed to public ownership. Commissioner Bancroft, he said, was the one man big enough, "in the face of inducements that would have tempted other men, to come out with a favorable minority report."

Mr. Hall interrupted to ask if Mr. Halcrow meant that the majority radial report was not an honest one, but the member for Hamilton protested against Mr. Hall putting words into his mouth.

"It makes my blood boil," he added, "to think that this Government have not had the courage to back up their convictions; they have passed the buck to commission after commission, costing the Province I do not know just how much, but anywhere from three-quarters to a million dollars.

"Stop Gallivanting."

"If they would stay here in the Parliament Buildings, and not be gallivanting all over the country to farmers' picnics and Dominion elections, they would be doing far more and accomplishing something for Ontario."

It would be Prussianism of an outrageous type, Mr. Halcrow said, were the Government to undertake,