

Drury Admits His New Hydro-radial Bill "May Not Lend Itself to Province-wide System of Railways"—Claims New Measure Provides for Safer Financing of Projects—Gives Autonomy to Municipalities in Operation of Lines

Provided the municipalities along the route of the proposed Port Credit, Hamilton & St. Catharines Radial Railway revote favorably on the project, the Drury Government will carry out its inherited obligation to guarantee the bonds of the Commission, and will exempt that railway from the provisions of the new Hydro-radial Bill. Premier Drury made this announcement in the Legislature last night in moving the second reading of his new measure.

In an address of more than an hour's duration in the Legislature yesterday afternoon, the Premier contrasted the alleged merits of his amending bill with the alleged defects of the act of 1914, and concluded that the Hydro municipalities, whatever their already expressed opinions, did not really want to be "tied hand and foot" to an "irresponsible Commission." He admitted that his act would not admit of a Province-wide system of radials, but it would, he maintained, enable the municipalities to serve their local needs on a sound financial and a feasible operating basis.

Two Toronto members, A. C. Lewis and Joseph Thompson, spoke in opposition to the Premier's bill, both of them demanding to know from whence came the demand for legislation amending that which the municipalities themselves had asked for and approved in 1914. Mr. Thompson agreed with the Premier in his declaration that it was an excellent bill, but he would qualify it with the additional words—"to kill radials."

Edgar Watson, U.F.O. member for North Victoria, moved the adjournment of the debate on the bill.

Can Build Own Radials?

Right at the start of his speech Premier Drury said he wished to place the Government on record as not wishing to hamper the municipalities in any way in the construction and operation of railways to serve their local needs. The bill was designed to give the municipalities full and free opportunity to co-operate with each other in any way for the building of electric railways. The Government was not trying to

strangle the building of these railways, nor trying to formulate a policy as to this kind of traction. He referred in passing to the question of the electrification of the branch lines of steam roads, and said he believed that might be done.

Mr. Drury reviewed the conditions regarding radials that had confronted the Government when it came into power in 1919. He said the Government found that all the trend of circumstances, as regards the policy then existing, pointed, not to local railways, but to the creation of a Province-wide system. The Government, he said, did not believe that a Province-wide radial system, coming into competition with Government-owned steam roads, and with highways, was a sound policy.

Gives Too Much Power.

The old act (by which the Premier meant the Hydro-electric Railway Act of 1914), he said, was designed to facilitate such a project. He quoted section 6, which gives to the Hydro-electric Power Commission the power to increase the issue of bonds on behalf of municipalities. He thought that was a dangerous power. He also quoted section 11, which required that the corporations should deposit with the Hydro Commission the necessary debentures, and such further debentures, on the request of the commission, as might be desirable to carry out extensions and improvements of railroads, and it was not necessary to obtain the assent of the electors for any by-law for further improvements.

"The municipalities," he said, "once they voted on this project, delivered themselves, tied hand and foot, into the hands of an irresponsible commission, so far as they were concerned."

Province-wide Scheme.

The evidence, he continued, bore out the statement made, that the project was not a project of local electric railways built and run to meet the local requirements—and that was their true function—but a Province-wide, ambitious scheme of publicly owned electric railways that had to come into competition with steam roads.