

The OBSERVER IN QUEEN'S PARK



The most charitable explanation of the sudden collapse of the legislative machine yesterday afternoon is that so many M.P.P.'s wanted to spend the week-end at home. In the midst of a discussion on the second reading of an important Government bill someone discovered that no quorum was present, and the House automatically adjourned. It takes twenty members out of a total of 111 to form a quorum, but only seventeen were in their places, eleven on the Government side, and six in the Opposition seats. The trains which carry most members home on passes leave Toronto between 4 and 5 o'clock. When the House opened there was a fair attendance for Friday, but one by one they disappeared, until the seats were nearly all deserted, and at 4.30 the end came.

Attorney-General Raney's bill respecting the sale of securities was under fire. This bill has been called "blue sky" legislation, though Mr. Raney himself does not care to credit it with that description. It embodies the best brains of a special House Committee, which sat during the recess, and the best thought of the Government, and as such is one of the leading bits of legislation on the sessional program.

Premier Left, Too.

The Attorney-General, in moving the second reading, made a brief explanation, interrupted only by a whispered conference with Premier Drury, who then left the House. Though the bill must provide a legal delicacy for lawyers or financial experts, only two lawyers remained to hear and criticize Mr. Raney, these being Hon. Mr. Ferguson and J. W. Curry, Southeast Toronto. Mr. Ferguson was speaking to the bill when it was drawn to the Speaker's attention that too few of Ontario's \$1,400-a-session legislators were on their jobs.

It was a poor day's work, all told. About half a dozen private bills were introduced; eight or nine questions asked; a complaint of Mr. Halcrow, Hamilton, heard and unanswered; second reading given Hon. Mr. Rollo's bill to amend the Public Health Act, and Mr. Raney's attempt to get second reading for his bill on the sale of securities. As matters now stand, the latter effort will have to be made all over again.

Is Group System to Blame?

It may be that the Government deliberately invited an adjournment from lack of a quorum. Perhaps, after all, there is some truth in the charge repeatedly advanced by Hon. Mr. Ferguson that the Government has no business ready for presentation to the House. Another rumor heard was to the effect that many U.F.O. members are not personally fond enough of the Attorney-General to see him through when it does not suit their own convenience. It was quite evident that no effort was made by any party or group to keep things going, which leads to an interesting speculation regarding any extension of the group system of government. With the group system, have the Ministers or the Whips sufficient power to keep members to their work? On the other hand, under the old party system it is inconceivable that the House should adjourn for lack of a quorum in the discussion of a bill being steered through by the first lieutenant of the Premier. As at present constituted, this Legislative Assembly of Ontario can provide a surprise every day to any person

reasonably familiar with Parliamentary procedure and practice.

Yesterday, too, some broad-minded school teacher brought his class of about twoscore to see the House in action. They sat in the gallery opposite the Government, where they must have learned a lesson of devotion and self-sacrifice to public duty.

Some Features of Bill.

The bill respecting the sale of securities provides for the appointment of a Commissioner of Securities, a new office. He may investigate the issue, sale or offer for sale of any securities, and has the power of a court in summoning witnesses and making them produce documents. If the Commissioner thinks any issue, sale or offer for sale of securities "is or may be fraudulent," he has the power to prohibit such a sale or offer for sale. It was this point that Mr. Raney had the opportunity to stress yesterday; that is, if there is any reason for interference with any sales, that interference comes in the form of prohibition. He also emphasized the fact that the Commissioner issued no certificate of good standing for any security. In other words, it was not his duty to earmark securities, good or bad. His whole duty, after inquiry, lay in prohibition, and, of course, in instituting legal proceedings for the enforcement of the Act and against those guilty of fraud. In the few minutes taken up by the measure yesterday Hon. Mr. Ferguson gave it as his opinion that the present Companies Act by a little amplification could meet the situation. He feared that some flotations, framed by the shrewdest kind of men, would get past the Commissioner, and people be defrauded. He asked how the Government was going to escape responsibility with such an Act on the statute books. He thought the Government was taking the risk of misleading the innocent investor. Mr. Raney would not agree to this contention, repeating his point that the Government, through the Commissioner, issued no certificate of good standing for any security.

Next time the bill comes up it is almost certain to provoke considerable debate. One interesting feature is that brokers and stock salesmen must be registered with the Commissioner. No one has yet been named for the office, though the last clause of the bill states that the Act is to come into effect on July 1 of this year.

Won't Talk Redistribution.

Mr. Halcrow, East Hamilton, has a notice of motion on the order paper calling for a redistribution in the Province. Yesterday he asked why this notice of motion was again passed over, saying that he was ready to debate it. Not a word of reply did he get from the Gov-

ernment benches, not so much as a nod of approval or disapproval. The House, what there was of it, was quite interested, but Premier Drury blandly passed on to another order of business. Evidently all is not unanimity on the Government side regarding redistribution plans, because it is only natural for members to do some worrying about their seats when an election is not far distant.

Amusing the People.

Hon. Peter Smith, Provincial Treasurer, answered a question yesterday concerning the amusement tax collected in four cities during the last three years. It is customary for Ministers to read the answers. Because there was quite a number of figures Hon. Peter wanted to pass his reply to the Clerk and be done with it, but he was made stand up and read it all. The figures in Toronto show a decrease from \$602,749 in 1920 to \$599,743 last year. Hamilton and Windsor also show decreases, while Ottawa shows an increase.

"Perhaps the decrease shows that times are getting worse under the present Government," commented Capt. Joseph Thompson.

"No; the people are getting so much amusement from our friends across the aisle they don't need it," retorted Premier Drury, which may indicate, at least, a broadening out in ready wit.