

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1923.

NEWSPAPER ITEMS ENGAGE ATTENTION OF ONTARIO HOUSE

Premier Comes to Defense of Page Advertisement of Resources

ACCUSED OF PROPAGANDA

About half of yesterday's three-hour session of the Legislature was devoted to discussions concerning what had appeared recently in the newspapers. The House did other things—such as receiving half a dozen answers to inquiries of the Ministry, discussing for an hour Attorney-General Raney's "Blue Sky" Bill, killing one and giving second reading to another of the bills of Dr. Stevenson of London—but the perusal of newspaper reports and advertisements was the big feature of the day.

Papers in Limelight.

Three distinct newspaper features were brought to the attention of the House before the orders were called: a \$500 page Government advertisement in a weekly paper, warm in its affections for the present Administration, which Hon. G. H. Ferguson characterized as misleading political propaganda; The Globe's report of a speech by A. C. Lewis, M.P.P., before a Conservative meeting, upon which report Mr. Lewis was interrogated by J. W. Curry, K.C.; and The Globe's news item of yesterday morning reporting that consideration was being given by the Government to a co-ordination of child welfare effort. Hon. Mr. Ferguson also brought up the last-mentioned, and received corroboration from the Premier.

"It is most apparent that it is purely propaganda issued from the standpoint of the Government," declared Hon. Mr. Ferguson, after holding the page advertisement up to the view of the House. "It is prepared with that object in view, and evidently published for no other purpose—and subscribed here to the advertisement, of course, are the names of the gentlemen who preside over the different departments of the Government."

Misleading, He Says.

What the Conservative Leader was concerned about—he said he did not care so much about the patronage aspect—was what he termed the misleading statements contained therein. He disputed the accuracy of the announcement that the completion of Ontario's good roads program by the end of 1923 would find this Province with a system ranking with the great majority of urban centres, which Mr. Ferguson

considered "rather far-fetched"; also he charged misinformation in connection with the statement that out of 49,875 miles of road in Southern Ontario, 27,117 had been surfaced and paved. There were other statements with which he found fault, but these were the main ones.

The Premier said that everyone in the Province must know that "surfaced and paved" included graveling, but the Conservative Leader promptly took him up on that statement, seizing upon it as a measure of proof that the advertisement was intended for Ontario political consumption rather than as a means of building up Provincial credit outside the Province. True, said Mr. Ferguson, the Farmers of Ontario would know that graveling was included, but he had assumed from speeches of his honorable friends opposite that the Farmers were up against it, and had no money to invest in Provincial securities.

Patronage Inferred.

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Doherty, defended the statements as relating to his department as accurate, but the Conservative Leader pointed out that one of the statements, relating to the possibility of discharging at any time of agricultural loan obligations assumed, was based on the expectation of the passage of a bill which the Minister was to bring down this session.

Premier Drury reminded Mr. Ferguson of a former moving picture political venture on his part when Minister of the old Government, and the Provincial Treasurer, taking a hand in the scrap, said that this Government had no newspaper patronage list, as had the old Conservative Government. Mr. Ferguson shouted across, "Oh, no," and Hon. Mr. Raney flung back, "Oh, yes," to which Mr. Ferguson responded, "The Globe always got our advertisements."

F. Wellington Hay, Liberal Leader, then took a hand, stating that, while he knew this Government would not be guilty of patronage, and would not lend financial aid in the way of advertising to a newspaper just because it was a Government supporter, still he noticed the frequency of Government financial advertising in The Farmers' Sun. But Mr. Hay, without smiling, said he was sure that the proximity of a general election, and the close association of The Sun with the Government, would have nothing to do with the appearance of financial advertising in The Farmers' Sun.

In All But One Paper.

The Premier closed the discussion by stating that the advertisement held up by Hon. Mr. Ferguson had appeared first in The Globe, and had run through all the Toronto papers with one exception. He said he assumed that the country would not expect the Government to penalize newspaper supporters by withholding from them Government advertising, and at the same time distribute it among newspaper opponents.

With that item of discussion out of the way, J. W. Curry, K.C., Liberal member for Southwest Toronto, arose to ask A. C. Lewis, Conservative, Northeast Toronto, as to the truth of The Globe's report of his speech before a Conservative meeting last week, at which he was reported to have promised, among other things, six weeks' Tory obstruction of any proposal for alternative vote, and, more important in the Attorney-General's view, that Conservative members had voted against their convictions on the "One Man, One Vote" Bill because they did not want to give the Government certain political advantage.

Difference of Opinion.

Hon. G. H. Ferguson, stating that he had no objection to Mr. Lewis answering the question, asked for the Speaker's ruling upon the rights of a private member to interrogate another on the floor. Mr. Speaker looked it up in the book, and found that it could be done in connection with a bill, motion, or other public matter relating to the business of the House in which the member might be concerned. Hon. Mr. Ferguson claimed the moral victory as his, and the Prime Minister and Attorney-General—who had by this time got into discussions—as theirs, or, rather, perhaps, Mr. Curry's.

At any rate, Mr. Lewis arose to answer. His reply to that Globe news story, he protested, had already appeared in the Press. What he had said was to the effect that Govern-