

The OBSERVER IN QUEEN'S PARK



The Legislature continues to smash Parliamentary tradition and Parliamentary procedure. On Tuesday everything seemed to be going smoothly, but yesterday saw another of those sessions for which the rule books fail to provide, and for which all existing regulations are inadequate. Even the 929 pages of Parliamentary usage, so carefully written and so minutely revised by the late John George Bourinot, are not sufficient to keep this Legislature in the strict path of duty. Perhaps some gifted man or group of men will have to devote long hours of study to produce a new code of debating rules for the direction of Ontario M.P.'s. Whether the group system, as we have it in Queen's Park, is responsible or not is difficult to determine. Whether out of the present intricate political tangle there will evolve a new legislative system, with new rules, is hard to forecast. In the meantime the House has strayed far, very far, from the precedent-piled methods of the Mother of Parliaments.

Quarrel on Government Side.

One incident of yesterday is quite sufficient to illustrate the remarkable happenings in the House. J. B. Johnston, Labor, East Simcoe, had an order for a return of all documents in connection with a case reviewed by the Workmen's Compensation Board. A bitter debate ensued, though the Government had no objection to bringing down all the documents. For about the third time, Hon. Walter Rollo, Minister of Labor, rose to explain. He claimed that the motion for the order was a "frame up" to lead to a general discussion of the board. Mr. Johnston, who sits on the same side of the House, and nominally supports Mr. Rollo, demanded a retraction. He indignantly denied being a party to a "frame up." Meanwhile the Oppositions rocked with laughter, while the two disputants on the Government side became more excited. Mr. Rollo appealed to the Speaker to know if the word "framed" were unparliamentary. Hon. Thomas Crawford, experienced at least in the Legislative chamber, who was in the Speaker's chair, refused to give a ruling. With the wisdom of a Solomon Mr. Crawford remarked, "That is up to the veracity of yourself and the honorable member. It is not for me to rule in the matter."

Had to Have Their Say.

Practically the whole afternoon was spent over this order for a return which the Government had agreed to bring down just as soon as the matter was mentioned. It was too good a chance for many members to overlook to state their opinions of the methods employed by the Workmen's Compensation Board. The duelling was principally between the Government and the Liberals and independent Laborites, the Conservatives for the most part remaining quietly in their dugouts, as the members of the board were their appointees. Only one Conservative, W. F. Nickle, Kingston, came to the rescue of the

board's personnel, but the members of the party had a good afternoon's entertainment. Much of the fireworks was provided by R. L. Brackin, West Kent, but R. R. Hall, Parry Sound, also had had an undignified experience with the board, and was therefore critical. Mr. Rollo took the view that, while the board was in his department, he could not be responsible for its decisions. In this he was supported by the Premier, who told the House that if the Legislature was not satisfied with the board's work it could deal adequately with the matter before the Public Accounts Committee. If there were justifiable complaints, he said, the Government would not "shirk its duty."

Quite in Agreement.

After an hour or so of wrangling, Mr. Nickle got the Speaker's eye, and delivered by far the best and most effective talk of the afternoon. He referred to the constant and continuous methods of the Government to escape responsibility, and then raised his voice in the board's defense. On the duties of the board and the Government, however, Mr. Nickle and the Premier afterward found themselves in perfect agreement on such matters of policy. The Liberal Leader, Wellington Hay, had a constructive suggestion in appeals from the decisions of the board.

The net result is that several members have relieved their feelings over the Compensation Board, and doubtless, if the occasion arises again, all and more will be repeated.

Protect Power Rights.

For the third time this session M. M. MacBride, South Brant, moved the adjournment of the House. Yesterday he launched into a discussion of The Globe's despatch about an American syndicate seeking power rights along the St. Lawrence. He found support from Hon. Mr. Ferguson, who urged upon the Government the importance of getting busy to save Ontario's power rights and combat the efforts of such financial corporations. The Premier disclaimed all knowledge of the business of the American proposal, and added he did not think it the duty of the Government to "spring into the air" at every newspaper story. "This Government intends to fight for the waterpowers of the St. Lawrence River and hold them for the Province of Ontario," declared Mr. Drury, with emphasis, and the House applauded. Major Lewis, Conservative, Northeast Toronto, uttered another word of warning. He reminded the Premier of the danger of water power control getting into the hands of the Federal Government. It was up to Ontario to be eternally vigilant in such matters, he added.

Outside of answering about a dozen questions by members and the introduction of a few private bills, nothing else was accomplished during the afternoon. A lot of talk has been broadcasted, but no legislation advanced a stage, and little better understanding of any question obtained.