

# IN QUEEN'S PARK



Hon. Frank Campbell Biggs, Minister of Public Works and Highways, got his bill to regulate the operation of public vehicles through the second reading stage in the House yesterday, but he is going to have a fight on his hands before the bill, or what may be left of it, becomes law. A public vehicle is defined as a motor vehicle operated to carry passengers or express. The motor busses of street railways are not affected by the measure. All other public vehicles are required to take out licenses. So far there is no particular objection to those portions of the principle of the bill, but Mr. Biggs proposes giving exclusive franchises for public vehicles. The following clause grants such a privilege:

"The department may issue permits conferring special exclusive or limited rights with respect to public vehicles as licensed and with respect to any highway or highways or portions thereof named and described in the said special permits."

## Substitute for Radials?

That clause is going to be given some considerable attention from the Oppositions if yesterday's preliminary skirmish is any evidence. The question may be asked if this clause is to provide the Drury Government's substitute for Hydro-radials or rapid traction between town and country? The controversy did not have a chance to develop yesterday, but it surely will come when the bill reaches the committee stage.

Mr. Biggs, who has attained a real Parliamentary manner, went into the merits of motor bus travel. During the present winter, he said, 28 motor busses had operated out of Hamilton, and not a trip had to be cancelled because of snow or weather conditions. He proposed to allot franchises on a gross earning basis, and have the bus companies make bids for certain routes. These routes would be over roads built and subsidized by the Government. He stated, in reply to a question, that no franchises would be given for town or city streets, so that there would be no usurpation of municipal rights.

## One Amendment Coming.

Col. J. A. Currie, Southeast Toronto, who swung into real action for the first time yesterday, protested. He claimed that a portion of the earnings should go to the municipalities through which the busses travelled, and the Colonel said he intended moving an amendment to that effect. Col. Currie also wanted to know about Ottawa. Would not Ottawa demand a share, since the Federal Government was aiding in good roads building? Thoughts of Parliament Hill near the Chaudiere and the Laurentian linger in Col. Currie's mind, even though he is now in the Legislature. To this question, however, Mr. Biggs had a neat reply: "Ontario is paying \$1.12 for every dollar we get back so far as Ottawa is concerned." It was evident that he did not intend that any money from granting exclusive motor bus franchises should go to Hon. Mr. Fielding's treasure chest, but should all help the Ontario highway improvement fund.

Mr. Biggs' bill states that even an exclusive franchise does not preclude the granting of another franchise if the department thinks the needs of the traffic require additional vehicles. Again the department claims the right to fix, or at least approve, the tolls to be charged, and may also revise these tolls at any time.

## Government-operated, Too.

In addition, Mr. Biggs wants the privilege of Government ownership and operation of such vehicles, as

the following clause testifies:

"The department may operate a public vehicle service on any public highway, may obtain exclusive rights therefor, may purchase or acquire vehicles and equipment for such purpose, and collect toll for such service."

The cost of such services is to be voted by the Legislature, while any surplus goes to the Consolidated Revenue Funds, and an equal amount credited to the Highway Improvement Funds.

Numerous clauses are devoted to the regulation of public vehicles, most of them designed to safeguard the travelling public. "Public highway" for the purpose of the bill is designated as "any public road maintained wholly or subsidized by the Province of Ontario."

## Page Sir Henry Thornton.

And so the opportunity is provided for local traffic throughout Ontario over those long, smooth strips of cement of which Mr. Biggs is so proud. Perhaps such a scheme will be dangled before the electorate during the next few months as the real remedy for Hydro-radial need, and the expense of the two plans contrasted, all for the political benefit of the present Government. "Biggs' busses" may yet become as familiar a name in this Province as "Grand Trunk." So far no person has written to find out what Sir Henry Thornton will say. Perhaps the Premier or Mr. Biggs will claim that motor busses will be only feeders for the National lines. If any such argument is required lots of material will be found in the files of Toronto papers printed during the last municipal campaign.

More will be heard of Mr. Biggs' plan to relieve the transportation problem in this Province. The Minister, too, will be criticized for keeping his eye solely on the Highway Improvement Fund, instead of letting some of the money go to other public coffers.

## Mr. Dewart's Busy Time.

During a brief visit to the House yesterday Mr. H. H. Dewart was given quite a busy time. The Liberal member for Southwest Toronto had hardly got his nose inside the door before the Premier called one of his bills. Mr. Dewart wants the Companies Act amended so that no payment can be made to Presidents, Vice-Presidents or directors outside of salaries for actual services in any year in which a dividend of less than 5 per cent. is paid shareholders. He also wants all company statements filed with the Provincial Secretary and sent the shareholders. Hon. Mr. Nixon, Provincial Secretary, agreed that shareholders should be given such statements. Col. Currie again thought of Ottawa, and claimed that the effect of such publicity would be to drive companies to get Dominion incorporations, and pass up Ontario and Ontario's fees. Strange to relate, Premier Drury agreed with Col. Currie in this respect.

Mr. Dewart's other bill would do away with the necessity of securing a fiat from the Attorney-General before a Hydro-electric railway can be sued for damages. As the lawyers are fond of saying, it would do away with a certain amount of legal circumlocution. Everybody seemed to be in favor of anything that prohibited circumlocution, so that, all in all, Mr. Dewart could consider he did a good afternoon's work.

Quite a number of questions were cleared off the order paper, but most members seemed a little agitated, and kept looking at their watches, because the trains which carry them home for the week-ends would not wait on M.P.P.'s. Adjournment came at 4.45, and the third week of the session ended without any person being politically much wiser.