

The OBSERVER IN QUEEN'S PARK



Yesterday was the Drury Government's lucky day. Horseshoes were pinned all over the Ministry. The debate on the Address, which looked as though it might last at least a week longer, unexpectedly collapsed. Legislative business was given a tremendous impetus. The public accounts were tabled late last night, and the Budget comes tomorrow.

The end of the debate came as a climax to another new bit of Parliamentary procedure, for which this Legislature is celebrated. Charles McCrea, Conservative, Sudbury, had led off during the afternoon, and had continued in the evening, his speech being a rebuttal to the attack on the Conservatives by Attorney-General Raney last week. He concluded about 9.15, and Col. Currie, Conservative, Southeast Toronto, was expected to follow. Col. Currie announced that he had been ill for several days, and, besides, had an amendment to submit. Courtesy, he declared, demanded that a copy of the amendment be in the hands of the Government a few hours previously. Therefore, he desired to move the adjournment of the debate.

Premier Against Delay.

Premier Drury was willing to waive the matter of courtesy. "The House must make progress," he announced, and added that Col. Currie had had nearly four weeks in which to prepare. Hon. Mr. Ferguson stated that he had never seen a request like Col. Currie's refused. Cries of "Go on" came from other parts of the House. "This debate has dragged on for an interminable time," again stated the Premier, not receding from his position.

W. H. Casselman, U.F.O., Dundas, said he disagreed with the stand taken by the Premier, who later said the House and country were waiting impatiently for the Budget, and business must proceed. Then Col. Currie, seconded by Major Lewis, moved the adjournment, and the House had its first division of the session, a division on a motion to adjourn a debate. The vote announced was 23 to 50 against adjournment, but was changed to 23 to 49, as J. A. Pinard, Liberal, East Ottawa, had a pair with J. C. Brown, U.F.O., North Middlesex, though Mr. Pinard voted with the Government, as likely would Mr. Brown.

Col. Currie then arose again. He said he could speak only three minutes, and preferred to drop everything, including his amendment. Quickly the original motion carried, and the debate ended.

Quite a Remarkable Vote.

The vote itself was remarkable for its cleavages. Mr. Casselman naturally voted against the Government, as did the following Liberals: Sinclair, Tolmie, McWhinney, Dewart, Cooper and Brackin. Malcolm Lang, Independent, Cochrane, also was against the Government.

Immediately the Premier called for the adjourned debate on the second reading of Hon. Mr. Doherty's bill to amend the Agricultural Development Act. This debate had been previously adjourned because Col. Currie wished to participate. He had again to ask that it stand over, a request which was granted by Mr. Doherty. After these two incidents many men asked themselves if the old Simcoe county feud, Drury vs. Currie, was going to break forth again.

Amendment Out of Order.

The collapse of the debate was not the only fortunate event of the day for the Government. Once

again the Ministry was enabled to shelve a discussion on redistribution—a discussion in which every member feels competent to play his part. So far this session the subject of a new arrangement of constituencies has been carefully avoided by the members sitting to the right of the Speaker. Yesterday's reference to this delicate issue did not amount to much in words, but the effect was quite far-reaching.

It came about in this way: Before the orders of the day were called, G. G. Halcrow, Labor, East Hamilton, asked permission to withdraw the notice of motion, number two, standing in his name. He asked the consent of the House to this withdrawal, since it was practically the same as the amendment he had moved to the Address. The notice of motion called upon the Government "to take the necessary steps for a more equitable and just redistribution." Of course, the request of Mr. Halcrow looked innocent, but behind it lay a nice little bit of practical politics.

Premier Drury informed Mr. Halcrow that the notices of motion had not been reached as yet. As a matter of fact, on Tuesdays the notices of motion are generally placed near the end of the order paper. Next the Premier called for the continuation of the debate on the Address, and Mr. Speaker Parliament rose to make a ruling. The ruling was nothing more or less than to the effect that Mr. Halcrow's amendment was out of order. He quoted a ruling from Bourinot, stating that it was not permissible to move an amendment to a question of which notice has been given on the order paper, and, further, that matter already under the consideration of the House cannot be the subject of an amendment. In other words, Mr. Halcrow, in his zeal to bring about redistribution, had overreached himself. Apparently he had heard whispers that his amendment was out of order, and had sought to get it in order by withdrawing his previous motion. In this case luck was once more with the Government, and, as on several previous occasions, luck was against Mr. Halcrow.

Mr. Halcrow's Argument.

The member for East Hamilton also had done some digging into Bourinot's books. He reminded the Speaker that in making such a ruling he must have regard to the probability of the issue being brought to the attention of the House within a reasonable time. He added that his notice of motion had been on the order paper since the second day of the session. The matter was of such importance, he stated, that he ought to have some assurance that it would be thoroughly discussed. Again nothing but silence came from the Ministerial benches. Apparently there is no use trying to get any information from the Premier about redistribution until his Budget speech.

As a matter of fact, the Premier's course forms good Parliamentary tactics. Had the amendment been allowed to stand the gates would have been wide open to floods of oratory on the debate on the Address, as all the previous speakers could speak again should they desire. It looks as though the Premier takes the view that the time has come in the Legislature when each debate will occupy its proper time and place, instead of being scattered everywhere and anywhere. There is no doubt now that a redistribution debate is coming.

Another incident yesterday indicated a desire on the part of the Ministry to get down to business. Again, before the orders of the

day, R. R. Hall, Liberal, Parry Sound, wanted to take another whirl at the Workmen's Compensation Board, which on two previous occasions had been debated at length. The Speaker suggested that Mr. Hall had better take the matter up at a more opportune time. The Parry Sound man was reluctant to do so, and stated emphatically he was out to make some adjustments in the workings of the board. However, he accepted the Speaker's suggestion, the House being saved another long argument, involving, perhaps, a half-dozen members.

A Legal Address.

Most of the time yesterday was occupied by Mr. McCrea, replying to the Attorney-General in the debate on the Address. He was the eighteenth, and last, speaker. From the point of view of the dignity of the House, Mr. McCrea was a remarkably good selection. Political feelings between the Government and the Conservatives had been roused to fever heat last week, and it would have been an easy matter for some fire-eating orator to rekindle the party blaze. Mr. McCrea, however, did not make a political speech. He made a legal address. Always under perfect self-control, always courteous, though often interrupted by the Premier and the Attorney-General, Mr. McCrea put the debate on a high pinnacle. Of course, he hit out hard, but it was in argument, and not in abuse. Practically his whole speech was a review of the Backus deal, that is, from the Conservative angle, and his conclusion was that the cards had been stacked in favor of "the Minnesota millionaire with the compelling eye and the member for Kenora to ride rough-shod over the people of the Province." He claimed that all the other bids on the English River timber limit were a frame-up on the Government.

Hon. Peter Smith Delivers.

Then, when the debate was over, Mr. Dewart, with mischief in his eye, inquired blandly of Hon. Peter Smith when the public accounts would be down. Mr. Dewart's question led into more sentences which irritated Hon. Peter.

"Well, sit down and I'll answer it," retorted the Provincial Treasurer, showing a momentary trace of anger. He said he would give the public accounts to the House Wednesday, but they were locked up, and if he could get his hands on them he would present them to the House right away.

"It is his business to see that they are distributed to the House tonight," pursued Mr. Dewart. "He ought to endeavor to find out where his misplaced public accounts are. Who is secreting them?" This and some more banter put everybody in good humor after the strained situation over the collapse of the debate.

Later the public accounts were given to the House.