

# The OBSERVER IN QUEEN'S PARK



The political future of William H. Casselman (U.F.O., Dundas) is the subject of much gossip around the Legislature. In view of the events of the last few days, the question is asked how Mr. Casselman can continue to sit on the Government side of the House, and well up near the seats of the mighty at that. Yesterday the Dundas man had a wrangle with Premier Drury, just as he had the day previously, and, judging by the roars of U.F.O. applause for Mr. Drury, the refractory member came off second best.

Mr. Casselman has a bill before the House to suspend the operation of the Adolescent School Attendance Act for five years. Before the orders of the day he read newspaper reports to the effect that the Premier had told a delegation the Casselman bill would be killed. He objected to any such snap judgment by the Premier before the bill had been discussed. A great force of public opinion was behind the bill, he claimed, and he thought the Premier ought to have waited for the argument. He asked five questions, the important one of which was how the Premier differentiated between stiffening public opinion against the Casselman bill and his refusal to aid in stiffening public opinion for the canalization of the St. Lawrence.

#### Advices a Sense of Humor.

The Premier verged on severity in his reply. He thought Mr. Casselman ought to cultivate a sense of humor. He admitted that he had indulged in a little prophecy, which was a bad habit, but he added with emphasis that the Government attitude was one of opposition to Mr. Casselman's bill. He claimed he was in close and sympathetic contact with the desires of rural Ontario. In this case the stiffening of public opinion was to be the unpaid work of public-spirited citizens, whereas the propaganda work for the St. Lawrence plan involved paid officials.

Mr. Casselman clearly was dissatisfied with the Premier's reply, as his interjections indicated. It was thought that he would be invited to take his place with the Ishmaelites on the Opposition benches, but no such interesting invitation was accorded. Before joining the U.F.O. Mr. Casselman was a Conservative, like most of the folks in Dundas, but it is doubtful if he can return to the fold of "the grand old party" for a while yet, for reasons back home, because at the last election he beat a Conservative, Irwin Hilliard, by something more than 1,500 votes. The present Conservative membership in the House, of course, would welcome Mr. Casselman with open arms, in the knowledge that he would be quite an addition to their brain power and debating ability. Mr. Casselman's future actions will be watched with interest.

Just in this connection, a remark by F. G. Sandy (U.F.O., South Victoria), while speaking in the Budget debate later in the day, is illuminating. He commended the lack of old-time party spirit on the present Government benches, adding: "You never know what a man will say from where he sits in this House." All in all, these things add to the many puzzling contradictions in Provincial politics.

#### Busy With Questions.

There were no fewer than five queries directed at the Premier before the orders of the day were called. W. H. Price (Conservative, Parkdale) asked if the Press reports about the Premier being

nominated by the People's Political Association of Halton were correct. He wanted to know if this was the new political party.

The Premier had a severe retort for Mr. Price. He was reminded, he said, how the inquisitiveness of a child had been curbed by the formation of an "anti-poke your nose society." He suggested Mr. Price apply for membership in that society. Then H. P. Hill (Conservative, West Ottawa) got into similar trouble. He read a speech of Mr. Mageau at Ottawa, to the effect that Premier Drury wanted to rejoin the Liberal party, and asked if that was correct. "Another candidate for my society," commented the Premier, and Mr. Hill had to be satisfied. If any deduction can be made from these and other observations and replies by Mr. Drury, it is that he is not slamming the door against any new political understanding or alignment.

Another reference to a new party came from Major A. C. Lewis (Conservative, Northeast Toronto), who alleged the Premier was casting longing eyes at the Liberal benches, and not meeting with discouragement. Major Lewis openly charged that "negotiations" were taking place between the Druryites and the Liberals, though later he changed the word to "discussions." Major Lewis also tried to draw out the Government on redistribution, though he met with little more success than many others who have made the same attempt.

"Does the honorable member think 'A' and 'B' seats in Toronto are justified?" asked Hon. Peter Smith. Major Lewis claimed he was in favor of single-member constituencies. He thought Hon. Peter had thrown out the question as a feeler for the Government plans of proportional representation for Toronto, but the Provincial Treasurer denied the imputation.

#### Hon. Mr. Bowman Speaks.

At 9.15 last night Hon. Beniah Bowman, Minister of Forests, arose to enter the Budget debate. Many members failed to remember when last they had heard Hon. Mr. Bowman, outside of a reply to a question. In fact, he does not bother listening to the House proceedings to any great extent, unless matters pertaining to his own department are under discussion. And so it was with some surprise that Hon. Beniah was greeted. He devoted about twenty minutes to a general survey of the work of his department, and then read a list of pulpwood concessions given by the Government since 1904. When he reached the English River concession, known as the Backus deal, the Conservative ginger group got busy. They wanted to know "why." Mr. Bowman gave the information he had in memoranda on his desk, but no more. When the questions came too rapidly he turned all the tormentors off by the

remark: "Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty near through with this list."

The Minister showed that the revenue of his department for 1920 was \$2,911,000; in 1921, \$4,035,000; in 1922, \$4,439,340, while the expenditure was: in 1920, \$3,358,177; in 1921, \$3,764,281; in 1922, \$4,638,457. These figures are given to show that Mr. Bowman had a deficit last year, though he explained the expenditures included those for trunk roads and settlers' loans. He admitted the deficit, but this did not satisfy R. R. Hall (Liberal, Parry Sound), who had gone into the public accounts and figured a surplus of \$2,809,000 for Mr. Bowman's department. The spectacle of a Minister claiming a deficit and an Opposition critic claiming a surplus is another example of those unprecedented things that occur in this Legislature. It should be added that Mr. Hall's purpose was to show that Northern Ontario had been milked for the benefit of the older part of the Province, an old and constant complaint of members from the North. However, Mr. Bowman stuck to his original figures.

#### Mild Criticism So Far.

The U.F.O. members are showing signs of accepting the "invitation" of W. E. N. Sinclair (Liberal, South Ontario) to let themselves be heard, now that elections are near. It was stated yesterday that so many Farmer members are busy preparing speeches for the Budget debate that the Opposition parties are unable to put up man for man to meet them. In the meantime everybody is waiting for W. F. Nickle (Conservative, Kingston) to give his portion to the debate. That speech will not come before Tuesday, at the earliest, and then the controversy make take on some new angles. So far the criticism of Hon. Mr. Smith's Budget has been of the mildest character. It may be said with safety that hardly a specific argument of importance against the Government has yet been heard. Sweeping general statements about extravagance have been uttered, and so on, but no members have dug up sufficient facts and figures to make Hon. Peter Smith and the rest of the Ministers sit up and take notice. Conservatives claim that next week will see something different.