

TREASURER MAKES REPORT ON WORK OF SAVINGS BANKS

Hon. Peter Smith Gives Interesting Details Regarding Operation of Government's Venture Into Banking Business

In answer to a question by W. F. Nickle, K.C., Hon. Peter Smith, Provincial Treasurer, yesterday afternoon tabled in the Legislature a statistical statement relating to the operation of the Drury Government's Provincial Savings Banks.

On December 31, 1922, total deposits in 14 branches stood at \$3,683,043.33. Interest on deposits accrued to that date was \$51,136.51, earned at an average rate of 3.21 per cent.

Cost of advertising is shown as \$32,002.53.

Seven insurance companies are listed as being associated with the Government's assured savings plan. The names of the companies, with the amount of insurance placed with each, to December 31, 1922, are as follows:

Continental Life Insurance Company, \$629,000; Commonwealth Life Insurance Company, \$273,500; Crown Life Insurance Company, \$816,500; Excelsior Life Insurance Company, \$39,000; London and Scottish Assurance Corporation, Limited, \$1,128,000; Standard Life Insurance Company, \$1,179,500, and National Life Assurance Company. The latter company associated itself with the scheme on January 6, 1923.

At the date mentioned above, 3,536 special assured savings accounts had been accepted. Total balance to the credit of these depositors at that date was \$50,782, while \$300.55 had been paid or accrued in interest. The average rate of interest paid on these accounts was 2.08 per cent. Twenty of these accounts had been closed out, while instalments were more than one month overdue in the cases of 267.

DEMANDS TO PROBE COMPENSATION WORK DEFERRED BY HOUSE

Sparse Attendance in Legislature Induces Policy of Delay

VARIETY OF PROPOSALS

After rounding out the last of the week's sittings with an hour and a half debate on a motion to authorize the Labor Committee to investigate complaints against the Workmen's Compensation Board, the Legislature yesterday afternoon lived up to a growing reputation for eccentricity by voting down the motion on a standing vote and then, after agreeing to a formal division, deciding to reopen the debate and postpone a division until next week.

This curious manoeuvre was executed in a House which by the time the vote was reached at 5.05 p.m. had dwindled to 22 members—two more than a quorum.

Various Views on Probe.

Opposition to the investigation demanded by the motion of M. M. MacBride (Independent Labor, South Brant) centred in the Conservative group, the members of which argued that the Government itself should investigate or else appoint a Royal Commission. Premier Drury favored an inquiry by one of the existing committees of the Legislature, while Hon. W. R. Rollo, Minister of Labor, wanted to appoint a special committee.

The first vote, by yeas and nays, was adjudged by the Speaker in favor of the latter. R. L. Brackin (Liberal, West Kent) demanded a standing vote. The result was similar—10 for and 12 against. Nothing daunted, the member for West Kent called for a division. He secured the support of the four other members necessary to make his request effective, and the division bells were set ringing through almost deserted corridors.

Decision Is Avoided.

Hon. G. H. Ferguson, Conservative Leader, pleaded for delay. Some of the die-hards whispered, "Stick to it," but finally both Mr. MacBride and Mr. Brackin capitulated. Hon. Peter Smith, who by this time was leading the House, confessed that he had wanted to say something; J. H. Marceau (Liberal, Nipissing) admitted a similar ambition, and

finally the latter moved the adjournment of the "debate" amid a general chorus of approval.

Who were the real winners of the argument is a matter for conjecture.

Praises Compensation Act.

The debate found Hon. Thomas Crawford (Conservative, Northwest Toronto) vigorously leading the opposition to investigation by a committee of the Legislature. So far as the act which the Workmen's Compensation Board administered was concerned, he said, it was one of the best of its kind on the statute books of any country. If there was complaint against the administration of the act, then the Government should be answerable, through its Minister of Labor.

Hon. G. H. Ferguson supported his colleague, but Premier Drury took an altogether different view of the question. He was quite willing to have the matter go to either one of the committees, the Labor Committee or the Public Accounts Committee. But he did not believe there was any need for an "investigation" of the kind which the member for Northwest Toronto suggested.

Would Restore Confidence.

"The Government does not believe there is anything to investigate," he said. "There were no charges made against the board. But there is dissatisfaction in the House."

The chief trouble with the act was that the members of the House knew nothing, or very little, of its operations, added the Premier. Confidence would be restored in the minds of the members of the House if the act and its workings were explained and discussed before a committee of the House, where all members could follow the discussion. But the act itself did not want investigating.

The Premier had received numerous letters from the Labor interests and from the employers, which indicated that outside the House there was general support of the act and confidence in its administration.

Hon. Mr. Rollo strenuously objected to sending the complaints to the Labor Committee. He would rather see the matter taken in hand by the Public Accounts Committee, but preferred that a special committee of seven or nine members be appointed and clothed with all the necessary powers.

Prior to the debate Premier Drury answered a question by J. McNamara (Soldier-Labor, Riverdale) by stating that since coming into office the Government had employed 1,057 returned soldiers, 127 of whom were disabled.

Included in the usual Friday afternoon crop of private members' bills which received first reading was one sponsored by M. M. MacBride seeking to empower Boards of Police Commissioners to add to their own numbers.

ACCUSES PREMIER OF "FOXY" ANSWER

Hon. G. Howard Ferguson Wants Him "to Practice What He Preaches"

GOT FACTS FROM PRESS

On Wednesday last in the Legislature Hon. G. Howard Ferguson inquired of the Premier if there had been a settlement in regard to power leases on the Abitibi River, and Hon. E. C. Drury replied that there had been no settlement. The very next morning there appeared despatches in the financial pages of the newspapers to the effect that the General Manager of the Hollinger mine, speaking at Montreal, had announced the receipt of a letter from Attorney-General Raney assuring the company a power supply.

Calling attention to the announcement and the Prime Minister's statement in the Legislature, Hon. Mr. Ferguson yesterday took very vigorous exception to what he deemed the Premier's evasion of his question. The House, he said, was entitled to frank statements from the Cabinet on public affairs. He was astounded, he said, "to read the flat contradiction of the statement that the Premier had made to the House. If we are going to live up to the high ideals that the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General have set for us we must adopt a different attitude."

In reply, Premier Drury said that the question asked him had been whether a lease had been arranged. His answer, he said, had correctly been in the negative. It was true, however, that the Attorney-General had communicated the Government's assurance that the mine would get power.

Hon. Mr. Ferguson—Will the Prime Minister say that his statement was a frank one? If he will, then I am satisfied.

Premier Drury—I cannot remember the exact question, but I regarded my answer at the time as a correct answer. A lease had not been entered into.

Mr. Ferguson—Most people's word is as good as their bond.

Premier Drury—And so is the Government's.