

# The OBSERVER IN QUEEN'S PARK



It will be difficult to maintain a quorum of twenty members in the Legislature for the next two weeks. The Premier has promised prorogation and dissolution on approximately May 4, and few are optimistic enough to think business can be concluded by that time. It may be stated with some degree of finality that considerable legislation will have to be left over for the next Parliament. Now that the outstanding question of redistribution has been dropped overboard, few members will display interest in general legislation unless the discussions promise to make campaign literature. Several private bills will keep legislators at their desks, but, speaking in a broad sense, public interest has departed from Queen's Park, and now centres in the election.

Many members will remain in their constituencies from now until election day. They feel they should be given the same opportunity to fight as their opponents, and events in Queen's Park will have comparatively little attraction. Political fences, scores of them badly shattered during the past four years, have to be mended, and fence-fixing can be done only along the concession lines, and not in Toronto. The exodus to the home counties was quite noticeable yesterday, while during this week-end many a political scheme and stratagem will be broached or decided upon. From now on it is purely a political game, not a legislative sport.

## Glad at the Result?

While everybody recognizes the absolute injustice of the present arrangement of Ontario constituencies, no one saw any tears shed yesterday over the fact that the redistribution bills had been withdrawn. True, Premier Drury and Mr. Raney did appear rather worried-looking, but nearly everybody else seemed rather glad things had resulted as they did. The Conservatives were the most jubilant, as many of them regarded the obstruction tactics as victorious Parliamentary practice. Most of the U.F.O. refused to register any annoyance, because they knew they could get home within a few days. Of course, they did not express pleasure at the fact that Premier Drury had been forced by reason of a "tyranny of talk" to capitulate, but there was a U.F.O. air of confidence that the country would understand, and render the verdict accordingly. The Liberals were willing to support redistribution, but simply sitting in the House and saying nothing while Conservatives took up hour after hour in monotonous talk appealed to them as an irksome, hopeless task, and they, too, are glad it is over.

## The Reaction in the Province.

Naturally, the question is being asked, What will be the reaction in the Province to these unparalleled scenes in Queen's Park during the past week? Undoubtedly Premier Drury will be blamed for bringing down the redistribution bills at so late a date. Both Liberals and Conservatives will criticize him for his dilatory tactics in this connection. The Premier may be trusted to have a vigorous and emphatic defense just as soon as he cuts loose from Parliamentary bonds. Mr. Ferguson will claim, as he has done in the House, that the Government had redistribution framed long ago, but tried to jam it through toward the end of the session by brute force. Still, Mr. Ferguson will have his troubles explaining why some of his followers resorted to methods which many people will regard as anything but fair. The Conservatives did offer to help in a

redistribution, provided P.R. and the single transferable vote features were dropped, but, as the constituencies are now carved up according to Conservative ideas, their suggestions are not taken too seriously. Again, the position of Mr. Ferguson himself is none too secure. Some of his ginger group followers, having been given the bit, may want to keep it, and run the party according to their own ideas. For instance, they may want to frame a new liquor policy, while Mr. Ferguson himself is certain the time is not propitious for any party announcement. It is now known that quite a number of Conservatives disliked participating in obstruction. They did not relish the idea of making spectacles of themselves by reading from encyclopaedias or long-forgotten debates or less pertinent documents. Still they were willing to follow the ginger group just to present the appearance of party solidarity. Their relief at the turn of events was greater than that of any member in either of the other two parties.

## The Liberal Position.

Looking back over the whole week's battle, it seems as though the Liberals secured what political advantage there was to grab out of the whole disgraceful affair. The Liberals were willing to help in getting redistribution to remedy the present population inequalities between ridings, and, as P.R. was in their platform, they were agreeable to an application of that system as an experiment. The Liberals took no part in the obstruction. None of their members took up unnecessary time in the debate, though they stated their position. The Liberal Leader, Mr. Hay, spoke for barely half an hour, stating for the party that they were willing to stay till Christmas to give equitable representation.

However, the battle is over in the House, with the result that a certain clique of Conservatives feel they are winners. The U.F.O., both Ministry and private members, are troubled and nervous, though perhaps not greatly grieved. The Liberals feel that when the controversy goes to the Province they have a clean argument to present. Party feeling has been strained to an extent that the ordinary amenities of public life are thrown to the discard. All of which promises to result in as bitter and personal a campaign as the Province ever experienced.

## More Trouble for Mr. Drury.

The troubles of Premier Drury will not end with prorogation. He has to face enemies within his own party if he is to survive. The Hicks incident in the House, when the U.F.O. Whip repudiated his Leader, was not a passing phase, to be forgotten when the campaign begins. Already candidates bearing the stamp of J. J. Morrison are

nominated against Drury men. The Premier is not the man to stand still and let such proceedings continue without comment. He will have to say something, and, judging by past performances, anything he may state will not tend to heal the breach between himself and "J. J." It will require all the diplomacy and suavity of that smoothest of politicians, Hon. Manning Doherty, to avert what may be a political feud to the death.

## Tempers Still on Edge.

The House yesterday was almost the antithesis of the seething excitement of Thursday evening. Tempers were still on edge, and the harshest word seemed to come the most readily, but nothing approaching an exciting pitch was staged. If the Premier went to his seat expecting to see a wonderful lot of legislation advanced, he was disappointed. Hartley Dewart raised the question of the propriety of the Gregory Commission on Hydro affairs hearing evidence during an election campaign. His protest was backed up by Mr. Ferguson, and the Premier was plainly annoyed at this and several other interruptions and irritations. However, he refused to call off the Gregory Commission, for the time being, and that body seems to possess the power of launching a political roo-bach, should it so desire, though there is no evidence at present that there is any intention to do so.

While the general situation was cleared greatly by the downfall of redistribution, there is still much fog in the atmosphere. Three and four cornered contests do not contribute toward clear political prophecy. The threat of a New Ontario party has added to the complexity of affairs. Perhaps when the members return from week-end talks in all corners of the Province the electors will be able to start to determine questions for themselves.