

Wednesday, March 12

# O. T. A. PLEBISCITE BILL CARRIES BY BIG MAJORITY IN LEGISLATURE OF ONTARIO

## Six Months' Hoist, Moved by Progressives, Is Defeated by 80 to 11 When Liberals and Labor Members Line Up With Government —Subamendment Raising Constitutional Question Ruled Out of Order

## PREMIER PROMISES NEW LEGISLATION FOUNDED UPON VERDICT OF PEOPLE

## Ferguson Denies Government Is Undermining Temperance Act—Merely Bowing to Will of the Electors — "Wet" Sympathizer Draws Rebuke From Raney—Tories Silent as King Tut's Tomb

By a vote of 67 to 22, at 12.20 this morning, the Ferguson Government carried through second reading its O.T.A. plebiscite enabling bill in the Legislature.

Government members lined up solidly behind the Treasury benches on the issue, and enlisted two recruits from the followers of Hon. Manning Doherty, Progressive Leader. They were Peter Heenan, Labor member for Kenora, and W. J. Callan, Labor member for Rainy River.

Otherwise the vote was along strict party lines, every Conservative member casting his vote with the Government for second reading, and every Liberal and every Progressive—except the two Labor members—voting against it. There were about a dozen absentees, but in pairing with their opponents across the House they also registered their approval or disapproval on party lines.

Hon. Manning Doherty's amendment for the six months' hoist was defeated by 80 to 11. As on the main vote, the Government forces presented a united front against the amendment. Messrs. Heenan and Callan voted against their group, and the Liberals also opposed it, on the ground, as set forth by their Leader, W. E. N. Sinclair, that they were opposed to a plebiscite, as against a referendum, now or six months hence.

Hon. Dougall Carmichael's amendment to the amendment, setting forth the demand of the Progressives, first, for an indication of desire on the part of the people for a vote, and, secondly, that the Government first test the constitutionality of the proposal involved in the bill before the House, was declared out of order in that it did not amend any previous amendment.

Not in a dozen sessions has the Legislature presented such an attitude of rapt interest and attention to any subject as that which prevailed throughout yesterday's debate, which lasted from shortly after 3 o'clock in the afternoon until precisely midnight, when Attorney-General Nickle concluded the debate.

### Galleries Crowded; Floor Jammed.

Galleries were crowded to the point of extreme discomfort. The floor of the House was jammed with visitors, whose numbers compelled encroachment almost to the floor of the House proper, scores stood who could not get seats, and the passageways leading to the visitors' galleries were so full as to prevent ingress or egress. In addition to the throng in the galleries and in the House, hundreds were turned away by the doorkeepers.

Outstanding, perhaps, in a terrific indictment of the Progressive forces, and especially of former Attorney-General Raney, with which Premier Ferguson addressed the House, was the Premier's discussion, as if it were a decided fact, of consideration of new temperance legislation next session. His point of view was that Progressives had no just complaint as to the abrogation of their rights because, after the vote, they could come back "next session" with the right to discuss and vote against the legislation proposed by the Government.

### Telegraphic Propaganda.

But the Premier's issue with the former Attorney-General was that he had either sent or caused to be sent over the week-end "telegraphic propaganda" to the various ridings, which had resulted in a return deluge of telegrams to members of the House. Mr. Ferguson charged that, for political purposes, the point at issue had been grossly distorted into "an attack on the part of the Government on the O.T.A.," and he aroused a fierce protest on that score from Hon. Manning Doherty, in the absence of Mr. Raney. Mr. Ferguson declared that the Government proposed "an honest and aboveboard vote," and predicted

that "a year hence" members opposite would endorse the course of the Administration.

Former Attorney-General Raney introduced a new angle of attack on the bill when he raised the question of the constitutionality of the pro-

posed procedure and intimated possibilities of a plebiscite proposal being hung up in the courts indefinitely. Attorney-General Nickle, however, claimed the course to be a perfectly safe one legally.

### Silence Surprises Sinclair.

Mr. Sinclair, the Liberal Leader, speaking briefly, said he was somewhat surprised at the silence on the Government side of the House. The only conclusion one could come to, he said, was that either they were talked out or were ordered not to talk at all. He had observed the pleasant smile on the face of the Prime Minister, and took that to mean that he would speak after he (Mr. Sinclair) had sat down. The Province was more anxious for the Prime Minister to speak on this debate than he was for him to speak.

There were others they expected to hear from, Mr. Sinclair proceeded, mentioning Messrs. Currie and McCausland. The silence of the tomb of King Tut seemed to have dropped down on the House since the 6 o'clock adjournment.

Mr. McCausland (in a very hoarse tone)—My silence is due entirely to my voice.

"I am sorry for your voice," said Mr. Sinclair. Proceeding he said he regretted that an amendment had been moved or an amendment to the amendment. The question, the Liberals argued, was on the principle of the bill and on the form in which it was brought in.

### Where Liberals Stand.

Continuing, Mr. Sinclair said: "The Liberal members of the House propose to vote against both amendments. We are opposed to the bill. The main question is not whether there is or is not a demand for a vote at the present time. We say any vote taken should be a referendum, not a plebiscite. For, are we primarily concerned with the question whether this bill is or is not within the powers of the Assembly? Even if legal, it violates the principles of constitutional government. We are opposed to giving the Government power to submit any questions it sees fit at any time and as often as it wishes. We will vote against any bill unless the Government takes the responsibility of incorporating in the bill the questions to be submitted to the people."

### Premier Speaks.

Rising shortly before 11.30 at night, Premier Ferguson said: "Seldom, if ever, has there occurred in this Legislature a discussion that has been so constantly and absolutely outside the issue. The Leader of the Liberal party has very well pointed that out.

"When this bill was introduced the purpose of the late Attorney-General in seeking adjournment was made apparent by himself. It was not that the bill should have fair discussion that he desired an adjournment over the week-end, or that the purposes of the Government should be considered, but that he should have the opportunity over the week-end of inflaming public opinion or misleading the public for purely political purposes."

Mr. Doherty—Would it not have been better if my honorable friend had sent word to the late Attorney-General? Because I have the gravest doubt about the accuracy of what he says.

Premier Ferguson—I told him before 6 o'clock to be here. And I don't think he will suggest I would not say it when he is here.

"There has been the grossest misstatement of fact and distortion of circumstances in this debate for the purpose of misleading the public on the question," proceeded the Premier. "My honorable friends straightway hid themselves to the telegraph office—"

Mr. Doherty—No, no. I spoke to the ex-Attorney-General about that and he denied it. I think it unfair to make statements like that about him when he is not here.