

Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup>

# MASS OF BUSINESS IS RUSHED THROUGH TO WIND UP SESSION

## Nearly Eighty Bills Disposed Of in Clearing Way for Prorogation

## GOVERNMENT THREATENED

## Opposition Groups Predict Overthrow on Beer Issue— Fight on Redistribution

Following a record session lasting from 11 o'clock Thursday morning into the small hours of Friday morning, the Ontario Legislature passed the contentious Redistribution Bill through committee and third reading stages, and at 1.35 o'clock this (Good Friday) morning concluded its business sessions. Prorogation will take place on Tuesday.

A motion by Hon. H. C. Nixon (Progressive), former Provincial Secretary in the Drury Government, to give the Redistribution Bill a six months' hoist was defeated by a vote of 56 to 14, Messrs. Pinard and Belanger, Liberals, voting with the Government.

The last items of business before the House were the Government control of liquor bills of F. W. Wilson (Windsor) and J. A. Currie (Toronto), and both members withdrew them on the suggestion of the Prime Minister.

### Snag Struck in Redistribution.

After struggling valiantly from 11 o'clock in the morning until 10 at night, and passing nearly 80 bills through third readings, the Ontario Legislature stuck last night on the Redistribution Bill of Hon. G. S. Henry, Chairman of the committee. Taken up at the end of the most strenuous day of many sessions, the bill to redistribute Ontario ridings—the first since 1914—met with the most strenuous opposition from Liberal Leader W. E. N. Sinclair, K.C.; Progressive Leader W. E. Raney, K.C.; M. Lang, Liberal, Cochrane, and Hon. H. C. Nixon, a member of the committee and signatory to the minority report condemning the proposed schedule.

### Dovetails With 4.4 Beer.

All Opposition speakers joined in an appeal to the Government to leave the proposed realignment over for a year. Mr. Lang characterized the measure as the worst gerrymander Ontario had ever had, and Mr. Raney aroused the ire of the Conservative members by declaring the proposals dovetailed very well with the Government's 4.4 beer policy.

Naming Windsor and Toronto, London and Hamilton, Mr. Raney said it was a measure calculated to keep the Government in power for 20 years.

Mr. Sinclair condemned the efforts, as he said, to jam the bill through at the last minute, when it had been introduced only a day previous. Strenuous objections were taken generally to the proposed increase of Toronto ridings to 15. Premier Ferguson denied that there had been any effort at a gerrymander and said the bill could go over until Tuesday, but not for a year.

### Outstanding Legislation.

Outstanding among the legislative items which the Legislature has enacted at the 1925 session is the Church Union Bill, uniting the three Churches, Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian; the 1925 O.T.A. amendments, legalizing the sale of beer of a 4.4 per cent. strength, the Gasoline Tax Bill, im-

posing 3 cents per gallon impost on gas used for automobile consumption; increased taxation upon half-mile race-tracks to \$7,500 a day; the Beverage Tax Act, imposing levies on soft drink and 4.4 beer; increasing the salaries of Cabinet Ministers from \$6,000 to \$8,000 a year, and the indemnities of members from \$1,400 to \$2,000 a year.

### Tempers on Ragged Edge.

The session has been a "hot" one from all points of view, and tempers of members during the concluding few weeks have been on the ragged edge both in the House and in the Public Accounts Committee, where important investigations were conducted by Provincial Treasurer Price. The O.T.A. amendments received temperance discussions in all their vigor and vehemence, the brunt of the furious battle which was waged being borne by Hon. W. E. Raney, K.C., Progressive Leader; Attorney-General Nickle and Liberal Leader W. E. N. Sinclair.

The Public Accounts Committee outstripped the Legislature in the importance of its proceedings on occasions, and concluded yesterday with the recommendation that the evidence regarding the transactions of George R. Harris, Hamilton bond man, be submitted to the Attorney-General "for his consideration and further action." The controversy of the 1919 Home Bank loans commission was waged with fury in the House and in committee, ending with the taking of evidence from former Treasurer Peter Smith and Deputy Charles A. Matthews in Kingston Penitentiary.

### Government's End Predicted.

From the political standpoint, the session ends with all parties claiming advantage from the proceedings. Liberals and Progressives prognosticate the ultimate defeat of the Government on the issue of the O.T.A. amendments, while Government members take the ground that it will be the salvation of their party politically.

When the House met yesterday at the first morning session this year there were 76 bills in various stages on the order paper. In addition there were eight questions and two notices of motion in the names of private members. All these items confronted the Legislature, to be cleared up in one day, to make way for consideration of the Redistribution Bill and then final adjournment for the year.

So steadily did the members devote themselves to business that practically every bill of the 76 had been given third reading by 6 o'clock. One of them had been withdrawn; another, John A. Currie's Government Control Bill, was awaiting debate. The remaining number, with about half a dozen exceptions, had been disposed of.

### Fight on Redistribution.

When the Redistribution Bill was finally reached, after 9 o'clock at night, Hon. Mr. Raney asked Hon. Mr. Henry if different censuses had not been used in the drafting of rural and city ridings. The Minister was understood to agree that a later census had been available from some urban places, but in any event the rural ridings had not changed materially, except in the suburban sections.

M. Lang (Liberal, Cochrane), a committee member, was the first to take up the debate. After declaring that it had become obvious to him that suggestions to the Chairman, Hon. G. S. Henry, were not to be favorably considered, Mr. Lang went on to declare, pounding his desk, that this measure would go down in the history of the Province "as the greatest gerrymander that was ever perpetrated."

Populations in various centres were not equalized as to representation in the Legislature, he claimed, even in older Ontario. And although a committee of four New Ontario members had waited on the committee and submitted New Ontario's claims to further representation, Mr. Lang said the disposition had been to "lay that aside."

Referring to the mining and agri-

cultural possibilities and actualities of Cochrane, which he represented, he declared it had 60,000 population, although the old census upon which the committee worked showed only 29,500. He would bet any man the amount of the cost of a new census if a count did not show there were 50,000 people in the riding now. He argued his riding and adjacent territory was entitled to four members alone. No conscientious man or woman, he said, viewing the discrepancies of the proposed redistribution could do otherwise than vote against the Government upon the issue.

Mr. Lang condemned the proposal to put fifteen members in Toronto, in ridings, he said, which the representative could step across. Why there were parts of his Northern riding that he had never seen! He urged the Government "to try to be fair, at least," and suggested that if they hadn't time this session, to lay it over for a year.

Premier Ferguson replied at this point. The decennial census, he said, did not mean that Ontario was confined to a redistribution once in ten years. He had conferred with Mr. Sinclair, who had agreed on the necessity of a redistribution this year.

Mr. Sinclair—I had hoped we would get one.

Mr. Ferguson—And we will get it if we stay here a week.

### No Gerrymander, Says Premier.

Northern Ontario, Mr. Ferguson said, was largely represented, so far as population was concerned, along railway lines, giving ready access to population. There was no necessity for Northern Ontario to have large representation with the organization that had been built up for Northern Ontario development. He referred to the large increases in population in Hamilton and Wentworth, and Windsor, which had to be taken care of. The Government, he said, could have instituted a gerrymander if it had desired, but proposed to be fair, as indicated by the bill, where there had been no effort to hive Opposition ridings.

### Loading Rural Ridings.

Hon. H. C. Nixon (Progressive, North Brant) criticized the action of the Government in using 1921 census figures for most ridings, but later population figures for Toronto ridings. He also objected to the practice which he claimed had been adopted of placing large cities in rural ridings. "That, to my mind, is certainly a most objectionable form of gerrymander." Answering the Premier, who interrupted to say that this always was done in redistributions, Mr. Nixon said he did not object in the case of small cities, but, instancing Hamilton and the Wentworths, they could in this way throw enough of the city vote into the rural ridings to carry those ridings.

Discussing Brantford, Mr. Nixon claimed it should have been given separate representation, with the remaining portion of the county forming a unit by itself. He added that he must admit it would be difficult to elect a Conservative in the county portion of Brant.

"I wish to take exception to the whole procedure in passing this redistribution bill," he said. The bill might very well stand over for another year. Consequently, when the bill came up for third reading he announced that he would move the "six months' hoist."

### Nine Dry Ridings Wiped Out.

Progressive Leader Raney declared: "The fact is, this bill is the warp of which the Ontario Temperance Act amendments of 1925 is the woof. This act completes the fabric. You wipe out nine dry ridings, representing a total dry majority of over 70,000.

"This is a wet Government. (Cries of "No," and laughter.) Taking the long view, the Government is looking for ridings about which there will be no doubt of the result."

Mr. Raney named Lennox and Addington, Northumberland, Middlesex, Wellington, Bruce, Huron, Norfolk and Grey, all returning large dry majorities in the plebiscite, as losing in total nine ridings, "and ten new wet ridings are created—five in Toronto, one in London, one in Hamilton, one in Ottawa, one in the rural Yorks, and one in Windsor."