

Friday, Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>

## HINTS MINISTERS DINED AT TORONTO HOTELS WITH LIQUOR ABOUT

**Harold Fisher (Ottawa West) Raises Lively Row in Legislature—Government Members Demand Explicit Charges or Withdrawal, and Speaker Qualifies His Accusation**

### DECLARES PREMIER COULD END SCANDAL

Another tempest on the liquor question, this time allegations of a scandal involving Premier Ferguson and members of the Cabinet, was stirred up in the Provincial House last night by Harold Fisher, Liberal member for Ottawa West, in continuing the debate.

While Mr. Fisher did not say so specifically, he hinted that the Premier and his Ministers had been in attendance at dinners in hotels, particularly in Toronto hotels, where liquor had been served. "The Prime Minister and his colleagues are not unsophisticated, not always innocent; they know what goes on," said Mr. Fisher.

Immediately Cabinet members were on their feet insisting that Mr. Fisher either be explicit in his charges or withdraw them. Hon. G. S. Henry, leading the Government in the absence of the Premier, was particularly insistent. Finally Mr. Fisher, stating that, while he had not said exactly that the Ministers knew what was going on at the dinners they attended, he had declared that other people at the functions knew the happenings, agreed to withdraw his allegations.

Mr. Fisher brought up the liquor question at the opening of his speech. "The Prime Minister," said he, "is apparently willing to abuse the prohibitionists. He should take a stand and say something to the lawbreakers. The duty of the Government is to enforce the legislation or repeal it. Something would be accomplished if the Prime Minister would say: 'There is a law on the books; some of you may not like it, but in the name of good government, it is your duty to observe it.'

"I am in sympathy," said he, "with the Attorney-General. It is not easy for him to enforce this law. No liquor law has been enforced perfectly. His position is much more difficult because of the apparent lack of sympathy of the Prime Minister and the outspoken lack of sympathy of members of the Government."

#### "Scandals" in Hotels.

"One of the scandals about the Province is the talk of what is going on in some of the hotels, particularly in hotels in Toronto. The Prime Minister could put an end to this in a short time if he would say to the hotelkeepers: 'This must stop!' and then try to help them stop it—lend them a few secret service men.

"We hear of dinners that take place in the hotels, some attended by the Prime Minister and other members of the Cabinet. The Prime Minister and his colleagues are not altogether unsophisticated, not always innocent, and they know what goes on—"

Hon. J. S. Martin, Minister of Agriculture, immediately protested. "I would like the honorable member to be more explicit," said he, "in what he says of members of the Cabinet being in attendance at dinners where liquor was served."

Mr. Fisher—The honorable Minister may not have attended, and it may be that it is not likely that he would attend.

Mr. Martin—I have been living at the King Edward Hotel for three years and I have never been at any dinner where liquor was served.

Hon. George S. Henry, leading the Government in the absence of Premier Ferguson, emphatically de-

manded that Mr. Fisher either be more explicit and name where and when the dinners took place and what members were there or withdraw his statement.

Mr. Fisher—The stories I allude to were concerned with functions at which the Prime Minister was present.

Mr. Raney—Where is he now?

Mr. Fisher—I believe the thing could be stopped. I think all that is necessary is a word to the management of the hotels that it meets with disapproval of the Ministers.

Mr. Henry—Does the Minister mean to say that the Prime Minister has been at dinners in hotels where liquor was served? He must be explicit or withdraw.

"Withdraw! Withdraw!" chorused the Government members.

Mr. Fisher—I will specify in this way. There is evidence to the people who go to these dinners that something is being supplied on the premises. It occurs in places where people come from all over the Province, and creates a scandal which does more harm than the seriousness of the thing warrants.

Attorney-General Nickle—I must ask the member to state specifically whether I attended such a dinner with knowledge of what was going on, or to withdraw the statement against me.

#### Exempts Attorney-General.

Mr. Fisher—Well, I'll withdraw it, as far as the Honorable the Attorney-General is concerned.

Mr. Henry again demanded a wholesale withdrawal.

The Speaker ruled that Mr. Fisher's words were a reflection on the Ministers, and that he must be explicit or withdraw.

Mr. Fisher—I haven't said that any member of the Cabinet knew this was going on. If that is your ruling I must withdraw. I have said that most others present at the dinners did know it, and members of the Cabinet had better make inquiry.

Continuing Mr. Fisher said: "If the Prime Minister has made up his mind to go to the country on some measure of Government control, I'm sorry. And if this Conservative party is going to the country financed by the liquor interests, I'm sorry. But let them try it. They may get away with it once—"

Mr. Raney—No, they won't. —"but not a second time, for I'm firmly convinced that the Province does not want more liquor."

Referring to the joint development of Ottawa River power, Mr. Fisher stated that such was necessary if the full measure of benefit from the river was to be harnessed. Commenting on the St. Lawrence River situation, he expressed the belief, in spite of the Premier's encouraging remarks, that Ottawa could not move any faster than the United States wanted it to.

T. A. Thompson (Conservative North Lanark) continued the debate and Karl Homuth (Independent Labor, South Waterloo) moved the adjournment. The House then adjourned.