

Saturday, Feb. 20th

NO 'WET' LEGISLATION HAS BEEN CONSIDERED, SAYS PRIME MINISTER

**Ferguson Declares O. T. A.
Will Be Enforced So
Long as It Remains on
Statute Books, and No
New Liquor Bills Have
Been Drafted**

PREMIER ANSWERS MANY QUESTIONS

**Sharp Controversy in
House With Progressive
Leader on Subject Mat-
ter of Latter's Questions
—Raney Asserts Drury
Government Never Re-
fused to Answer Queries**

When Opposition members in the Provincial Legislature yesterday continued their attack on the Government on the liquor question, urging the Prime Minister to show his hand, Mr. Ferguson, though not giving full and explicit answers to their queries, declared that no liquor bill had been drafted, no such legislation had been considered by the Government, and that as long as the O.T.A. was on the statute books it would be enforced.

He gave this information between the questions launched at him by W. E. N. Sinclair, Liberal Leader, and Hon. W. E. Raney, Progressive Leader. Mr. Sinclair wanted to know if C. R. McKeown (Conservative, Dufferin) was speaking with the sanction of the Government, and if the Government concurred in his remarks, at a public meeting in Toronto on Thursday night when he said that public sentiment behind the O.T.A. would be wiped out within a year.

Will Enforce O.T.A.

"I do not put restrictions on the speech of individual members, and I do not intend to take responsibility for it," replied Mr. Ferguson. "This Government does not believe there should be legislation on the statutes that cannot be enforced. As long as the O.T.A. is on the statute books it will be enforced. If we have anything to say about it the Government will take the House and the public into its confidence."

Later Mr. Ferguson came to a question on the order paper by Mr. Raney, who asked if the Government had since last session given consideration to a policy on Government control, beer and wine licensing, or local option, and whether any bill had been drafted for submission to the members or as a basis of discussion for the electors.

"These questions are improper, as an answer to them might be construed as a statement of Government policy," objected Mr. Ferguson. "But in order that the position of the Government will not be misrepresented and misunderstood, I wish to say to the House in this connection that no such bill has been drafted, no instructions have been given, and no such legislation has been given."

Will Refuse to Be Questioned.

"I might say," he added, "that it is not the intention of the Government to answer improper questions in the future, and, with all due deference to the Speaker, I do not think they should be on the order paper."

Mr. Raney—Now you have your marching orders, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ferguson—Not marching orders. The honorable member was a member of a Government for a number of years, and he knows as well as I do that such questions are improper.

Mr. Raney—I do not recollect that we ever refused to answer any questions that appeared on the order paper.

Mr. Ferguson—I'm afraid you've got a very bad memory.

Further discussion involving the O.T.A. was precipitated by E. Proulx (Liberal, Prescott), who drew the attention of the House to a story from Cochrane that when a drug store there had been fined \$2,000 arrangements had been made with the Liquor Commissioners to pay the amount in monthly instalments. He wanted to know if this instalment payment was a general practice, and if a criminal arrears department would be established to collect fines.

Attorney-General Nickle explained that in this case, if the \$2,000 fine were collected at once, the drug company would have been put out of business and innocent creditors would be injured. Two responsible men had given securities for the fine, and the store had been placed in the hands of a trustee to sell the stock at the best possible value and protect the creditors. He emphasized that it was an unusual and special case.

J. W. Widdifield (Progressive, Ontario North) wanted to know what plan the Government had to bring in on Government control if the 1924 plebiscite had favored such a system. Mr. Ferguson stated that the plan was briefly set out in the question submitted to the people at that time and that the final details had been left in abeyance.

It had been expected that Mr. Ferguson might reply to Harold Fisher (Liberal, Ottawa West), who had intimated that the Prime Minister and Cabinet members had attended dinners in Toronto hotels where liquor was served, but the Premier made no reference to the Ottawa man's remarks, probably taking into consideration that he had withdrawn his statements when Cabinet members protested that he should be more specific or retract them.

RANEY ASKS HOUSE TO TAKE DRY STAND IN NEW RESOLUTION

**Manufacture of Liquor and
"Smuggling" to U. S. Vig-
orously Condemned**

QUESTIONS CONTINUE

Apparently unruffled by the severity of Premier Ferguson's attack on him Thursday, Hon. W. E. Raney, Progressive House Leader, continues to grind his battle-axes with the idea of penetrating, sooner or later, the Premier's defense along the lines of liquor legislation.

20

FEB

1926