

DEPARTMENTAL HELP FOR FRENCH SCHOOLS URGED BY BELANGER

Liberal Member Calls for Educational Assistance to Effect "a More Contented Ontario"—Lethbridge Contradicts Ferguson's Statements Regarding Rural Hydro, and Brantford Clergyman Makes Debut in House

RANEY ATTACKED AS "MUD-SLINGER"

A ringing appeal from Aurelien Belanger, Liberal member (Russell), for the departmental co-operation he claims to have been long denied the schools of the French-speaking people of Ontario; contradiction by J. G. Lethbridge, Progressive member (West Middlesex), of Premier Ferguson's statements regarding hydro extension to the "farmers" of the Province; and the first appearance in a speaking role in the House of Rev. W. G. Martin (Brantford), one of the two clergymen elected last December on a Government-control ticket, were features of yesterday's continuation in the Legislature of the debate on the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Belanger's oratory was again much in evidence, and he created a profound impression with his review of the bilingual schools situation, and in his sincere expression of hope for assistance, educationally, by which, he claimed, "a more contented Ontario" might be effected.

Policy Criticized.

He was critical, too, of various other lines of Government policy. In this respect he had the support of Mr. Lethbridge, who, while withholding comment from the Government-control bill until it comes down in the House, doubted that, through its medium, Premier Ferguson would solve the vexatious problem of traffic in alcoholic beverages.

He charged Hon. W. E. Raney with "vilification" and "mud-slinging," and, amid the plaudits of Government supporters, warmly defended Canon H. J. Cody, who had been the target, he said, for an unwarranted attack from Mr. Raney, earlier in the session.

Touches on Throne Speech.

As for the Speech from the Throne, said Mr. Belanger, it contained but "three intelligible and important forecasts." These were mention of Government-control legislation; provision for the further extension of university education to local centres, and the hoped-for completion of the inquiry into English-French schools.

"As for Government control," he continued, "it is well known that it is not the Government's progeny. It has been taken bodily from this side of the House."

Government members interrupted with laughter and desk-banging.

Urged to Modify O.T.A.

"For three years," Mr. Belanger went on, "we have moved resolution after resolution, registered vote after vote, calling on the Government to modify the O.T.A. in order to bring it more in line with public opinion."

"You want to be careful," Mr. Ferguson interjected. "There's cannon to right of you, and cannon to left."

"But there's victory in the offing," retorted Mr. Belanger.

Liberal Motion for "G.C."

Continuing, he noted that just a few months before the Prime Minister had announced the liquor policy with which he was to go to the people two Liberal members, the late R. L. Brackin and J. A. Pinard, had moved in the House urging the Government "to adopt a system of sale under Government control, with provision for local option."

"This," he continued, "is, almost in the very words, the context of the manifesto issued by the Prime Minister, a crystallization of the opinion held by some members on this side of the House.

"Why should the Prime Minister require in the last session that his followers vote down that resolution? The answer is simple. The Prime Minister needed that question to go to the people. The Prime Minister wanted to use the liquor issue as a smoke screen to hide the administration of the Province—and a succession of deficits—and he has succeeded remarkably.

He went on to refer to Premier Ferguson's announcement of his Liquor Commissioners. "It is remarkable," he continued, "that of the strong men he has chosen two have been taken from members of the House of Commons at Ottawa. Is that a sign of the times? Is our Prime Minister disinteresting himself little by little from this Assembly and casting his gaze farther east?"

"However, it is my belief that the Prime Minister of the Province, like Caesar of old, would rather be first in the Province than second at Rome."

"Like Caesar's Wife."

"I'm like Caesar's wife," the Prime Minister interrupted—"above suspicion."

In speaking of the bilingual schools question, Mr. Belanger claimed that, in its attitude toward English-French-speaking institutions, the Government of the day had not lived up to its professed aim of "placing higher education within the reach of all."

Instead of decentralization of education, which the Premier was advocating, "we have in our case," said Mr. Belanger, "centralization. Instead of our secondary education being left as it was, it has been taken away and centralized at Sturgeon Falls and Almonte. I have no doubt when the Commission investigating the question makes its report that one of its strongest recommendations will cover the restoration of things to the old scale."

Anxious About Delay.

Mr. Belanger was anxious, he said, to learn why the committee's inquiry had been prolonged month after month. What had made him anxious, he added, was the fact that in his riding of Russell in the last election campaign the Government candidate had inferred to the public that Dr. Merchant (Chairman of the Commission) was so familiar with the bilingual situation that he could, had he wanted to, make a report in a couple of weeks' time.

Mr. Belanger said he had no fault to find with Dr. Merchant's investigations. He had accompanied him on many investigations. They had been thorough and honest, and his findings had been correct.

"But will his report be based on those findings?" he asked. "Or will he find, as he found in 1912, that the schools investigated are merely understaffed in teachers?"

Teachers Ill Equipped.

In many of the French-Canadian schools, declared Mr. Belanger, the teachers were immature, ignorant and insufficiently prepared for the tasks before them. As a consequence the committee's investigation had been welcomed, for it would mean, he said, that "we shall now be given the means of preparing our teachers for their work."

With the exception of the co-operation secured from the present Government, the French-speaking people of Ontario had never had any assistance from the Department of Education.

Premier Ferguson interrupted at this juncture to say that the prime reason for the committee's delay in reporting had been the three elections, two Dominion and one Provincial, which had intervened since the time of its appointment. The committee, he said, had felt it wise to discontinue investigations during election periods.

No Cause to Fear.

The speaker claimed that if proper facilities in the way of teachers and training were afforded the French-speaking people Ontario would have no cause to fear of "their children" growing up with no knowledge of the "King's English." Any effective instructional methods employed at the present time were not owing to the Government, he maintained. "We instituted them ourselves," he declared, "when co-operation was denied us."

The time had passed, he said, for preaching "bonne entente." The time was ripe for action. With sympathetic co-operation assured, there could be no doubt, he asserted, of a more "united, peaceful and contented people in Ontario."

Manitoba Plebiscites.

Objection was taken by Mr. Lethbridge to a statement in debate from Major T. A. Kidd (Kingston) that "the day of avoiding responsibility by plebiscites was past." He referred Major Kidd to the present situation in Manitoba, where, he said, a plebiscite on the sale of beer by the glass is being taken.

Mr. Lethbridge commended the work of Hon. Charles McCrea, Minister of Mines; and in the Government's proposal to extend the T. & N. O. Railway he recognized a noteworthy advance toward tapping the coal reservoirs reported in the James Bay basin, and thereby establishing a coal supply for Ontario that would make the Province independent in fuel.

Premier Ferguson's claim that

20,000 farmers were now being served by the Government with rural hydro was disputed by Mr. Lethbridge, who quoted statistics from the Hydro Commission's last report to show, as he stated, that only 7,755 actual farmers were being served. True, he said, there were many suburbanites and hamlet residents, who enjoyed hydro as a utility, but these paid rates different from those paid by farmers, and could not be included in the latter class.

Doubts Premier's Solution.

As to his attitude on the liquor question, Mr. Lethbridge said: "I am waiting very quietly until the bill is brought down. I am quite pleased with the Commission. I understand the difficult task the Commissioners will have in satisfying, on one hand, the brewers and distillers, and, on the other, making for better temperance, and a more sober and contented people in this Province. I conscientiously hope that the Prime Minister has a solution to this trying problem, but I have my doubts. I think it is up to every citizen to respect the law."