

NORTH GREY MEMBER CHARGES GOVERNMENT WITH NEAR-BRIBERY

D. J. Taylor Reads Copy of Circular From Liberal-Conservative Association Received by Rural Motorists on Eve of Election — Declares Increased Revenue Result of Wise Investments of Drury Government

RURAL EDUCATION ASSAILED BY PEARSON

A charge that the Government circularized the motorists of Ontario just prior to the election in a way which "was as close to bribery as it was possible to be and yet escape the law" was levelled against the Ferguson Administration by D. J. Taylor (Progressive, North Grey) when he resumed the Budget debate in the Legislature yesterday.

Circulars said Mr. Taylor, which were part of the move so nearly approaching bribery were received by the motorists in rural ridings on the eve of the election. They contained promises of reduction in license fees and a plea for a vote for Government control, partly on the ground that it would mean increased revenue, which, in turn, would mean further taxation reduction.

Henry Protests.

"I've never seen that letter," protested Hon. George S. Henry, Minister of Highways.

"It affects your department," said Mr. Taylor.

"If you care to look at it, here it is now," interjected Mr. Sinclair, holding up a book containing a copy of the letter.

"Read it," Government members shouted.

Mr. Taylor took the book and read. "It is addressed to the motorists of Ontario," said he. "It starts off by saying that motor licenses are high because the Drury Government left a legacy of deficits. It lists the deficits."

"Read them," reiterated Government members.

"It's the old, old story," retorted Mr. Taylor, "of blaming the Drury Government."

Reduction Promised.

"But," he continued, "the letter says that Premier Ferguson promises you a reduction of \$5 in license fees."

He paused to glance down the document. "I see the onus of the letter is on the Prime Minister, not on you." He nodded in the direction of Mr. Henry.

"It is the earnest hope of this Government," he went on, reading from the circular, "that your taxes as a motorist will be reduced." Then it says—

"Read it all; it's part of your speech," shouted Government members.

"I'll pass it over to any one who wants it," retorted Mr. Taylor.

"I object to you passing it over," interjected Mr. Sinclair, smiling.

"Well," continued Mr. Taylor, "the letter goes on to say: 'If Government control is an advanced step in temperance, you should not lose sight of the increased revenue that it will bring.'"

Five Dollars for Vote, He Says.

"In other words," he declared, "it says, 'We are willing to give you for your vote and interest a five-dollar bill.'"

"If the honorable member quotes from a document, he must read it all," Mr. Ferguson objected.

So Mr. Taylor read the circular, emphasizing that it contained a plea for votes for Government control "to advance the cause of temperance," and to "bring in revenue" that would "benefit motorists" when expended on good roads, and which would "lower taxation."

Asks Fixing of Stickers.

"Besides," said he, "the letter asked every motorist to fix a sticker on his car and drive up and down, showing his support of the Government."

"That's only to show youth wouldn't retreat," laughed Mr. Ferguson.

"But there's a rider in the letter," Mr. Taylor noted, "saying it was illegal to have the sticker on a car on election day."

"But it's not," declared Government members.

"Well, that's in your letter," retorted Mr. Taylor. "You took no chances."

"Who signs the letter?" Premier Ferguson queried.

"It's from the Liberal-Conservative Association," replied Mr. Taylor. "It's not signed. Just a printed form."

"Oh, but you said it was a departmental letter," objected Mr. Ferguson. "It's from the Liberal-Conservative Association."

"Both Work Together."

"Oh, it's just the same," retorted Mr. Taylor. "They both work pretty well together. Anyhow, it is as close to bribery as it is possible to be and yet escape the law. But the Prime Minister will probably treat it as a declaration of policy."

Just before springing this charge he noted that in pre-election days the Government had promised increased mileage in highways. It took ten years to complete the present system, said he, and it would take five years to complete the additional mileage promised. "The people in the ridings that were promised these political favors will wake up to the fact that it won't be completed next year. Who knows but what some of my friends on this side of the House will complete it?"

"Ho! Ho!" laughed Conservative members. "Hope springs eternal . . ."

Replies to Criticism.

He dropped the subject of pre-election doings and went on to other topics. He dealt with the Conservative members' criticism of the Drury Administration. It was natural, said he, that the present Budget should show an increased revenue, because this revenue was the result of wise investments of the Drury Government. Conservative members had scored the bookkeeping system which placed charges for the timber probe in an extraordinary account.

But, said Mr. Taylor, the probe had extraordinary results. It resulted in three and a quarter million dollars of added revenue for the Province.

"This Government," he emphasized, "is living on the earnings and reaping the benefits of the investment of the Drury Government."

Mr. Taylor agreed with Hon. James Lyons that the Government should make a further cut in the automobile-marker tax, and expressed the belief that the loss of revenue could well be made up from increased taxation on gasoline. His idea was that the markers should cost applicants no more than the price of their manufacture and distribution.

Referring to educational matters, Mr. Taylor pointed out that there was no increase in the estimated educational expenditures for 1927 over the past year, and that, as a consequence, there appeared to be no hope that the "plan" of Premier Ferguson to place first and second year university work in secondary schools of the Province would be advanced this year. He favored the plan, he said, if it entailed no additional taxation on the ratepayers, but he was afraid it might be shelved, as other "schemes" of the Minister of Education had been shelved.

In respect of "liquor," he expressed the thought that the \$3,500,000 revenue anticipated this year by the Government would be found to be considerably below the actual profit.

May "Outdo" Bootlegger.

While declining to discuss the bill until it had come down to the House, he ventured the fear that the Government might "float" so much liquor that, in trying to "beat the bootlegger," it might "outdo" him.

H. C. Schofield (Conservative, Toronto St George) talked for fifteen minutes on the question of British emigration to Ontario and the working of the Training School for Underprivileged Boys at Bowmanville. Mr. Schofield referred to the activities at the close of the war of the Soldier Settlement Board, of which he was Chairman, and said that there was valuable land lying around the T. & N.O. Railway which might be settled by desirable farming immigrants if the right way was gone about it.

Involved System.

P. W. Pearson (Liberal, North York), a man of many years' experience in municipal affairs, a veteran member of the York County Council, next speaker, at first compared Provincial financing with the financial methods of the County Council. Deficits, said he, in County Council statements really meant deficits; interest meant interest; but here in the Provincial Department the system was so involved that financial statements amounted to words and figures which bewildered a layman in the House.

He had examined the Budget statements issued during the administrations of the past four Governments, and of the last Provincial Treasurer. Proudly he declared that his system of bookkeeping was far in advance of that of the preceding Government.

Good Word for Drury Regime.

The present Government was prone to score the Drury Administration, "and yet I don't think there is a member in this House," said Mr. Pearson, "who honestly believes that there was a deficit of fifteen millions when the Farmers went out. I haven't any brief for the Farmers, but I know that, while there were accounts unpaid, there were large amounts of revenue not collected. And I think it is beneath the dignity of members of the Government to take petty advantage of—especially of a poor set of farmers."

J. W. Widdifield (Progressive, North Ontario) deplored the fact

that the farmers, as he said, were not getting what they should from Hydro. While he would not advocate a flat rate for power, he would suggest that some compromising rate be fixed by the Government in place of the "prohibitive price" now obtaining.

It was his idea that Hydro should be made a Government department, and that a better point of contact should be established between consumers and the Hydro service. He inferred, from a newspaper report, that the Central Power Association was not at all satisfied with recent rates, and would ask for an explanation.

Premier Ferguson rose to say that the rates now being charged these consumers were less considerably than the rates struck in the contracts by which they are still bound.