

LYONS SEEMS READY TO "SWAP PUNCHES" WITH HON. E. C. DRURY

Former Conservative Minister Pays His Respects to ex-Premier

FEARS "SHADOW BOXING"

It was evident to those who heard him in the Legislature yesterday that Hon. James Lyons, of "Sunshine Budget" notoriety, is quite willing to "swap punches" with ex-Premier Drury. But, apparently, there is little chance of any personal encounter between the two. In fact, Mr. Lyons assured the House that he had no intention of "mixing" it with the former Prime Minister of Ontario.

"For," said he, "if Mr. Drury is as adept at sidestepping any blow I might deliver as he was at sidestepping his responsibilities as Prime Minister, I would certainly be hitting at a shadow."

What It Is All About.

In his Budget debate speech of Tuesday last Mr. Lyons charged that Mr. Drury had fallen so far from grace as to use old markers on his new car. Mr. Drury challenged the correctness of the charge, and, through a Toronto evening paper, broadcast the statement that Mr. Lyons had done his "sniping" in the Legislature, and under its protection of privilege, and not on the street, or from a public platform, where it might be answered with "a punch on the nose." It was to this broadcast that Mr. Lyons took vigorous exception yesterday.

"I repeat here today," said he, "the exact words I used on Tuesday. And I repeat them under no protection from this House."

A further reference by Mr. Lyons to Mr. Drury's "veracity" brought protest from Hon. W. E. Raney that no more "slanders" should be permitted. Instantly there were cries of "Order!" from Conservative benchers, but the Progressive Leader would not sit down until the Speaker of the House ruled that Mr. Lyons, as far as he had proceeded, had not infringed on the rules of the Legislature. Mr. Lyons then commented on Mr. Drury's statements that his (Mr. Lyons's) license-switch charge was "untrue"—and "a lie."

"It's not a lie," said Mr. Lyons. "It's the truth. And I know what I'm talking about, too."

What About Minister's Salary?

If it was a question of veracity to be decided, he added, he would refer the House to Mr. Drury's assertion—two years after he had come into power—that \$12,000 a year was too much money for any Cabinet Minister to draw; to his announced acceptance of only \$9,000; and, then, to his remarkable reversal of conscience after his rejection at the polls by the people of the Province.

"If his word was beyond question," said Mr. Lyons, "why did he, when the people showed him that he was no longer wanted, sneak back to the Treasury and take the money which he had turned down."

REPORTED LOBBYING OVER GAS MEASURE BEGINS TIFF IN HOUSE

Albert Pinard Becomes Indignant, Toronto Legislators Explain, and Premier Quiets Wrangle in House When First Reading of City's Gas Company Bill Is Moved—Revision of Meter Rental System Sought

POLICY UNSOUND, DECLARE SPONSORS

Introduction to the Legislature yesterday of the two bills respecting the Consumers' Gas Company of Toronto caused no slight flurry.

No sooner had Russell Nesbitt (Conservative, Toronto Bracondale), who is sponsoring the measures for the City of Toronto, moved for first reading of one, than Albert Pinard, Liberal member for Ottawa East, was on his feet protesting against an alleged "lobby" being conducted by the Board of Control in Parliamentary corridors, and a reported expenditure of \$2,000 by the board on the services of prominent legal counsel, to be heard before the Private Bills Committee.

Too Small to Buy Vote.

Mr. Pinard was quite indignant over the matter, saying that \$2,000 was "far too small to purchase the vote of any member of this House." He trusted that when the measure appeared before the committee it would "be turned down with the ignominy it deserved."

Mr. Nesbitt took time to explain that the Board of Control—in the absence of Mr. Geary, corporation counsel—should have the right to retain what counsel they desired, and what had been done, he was certain, reflected in no way on the House or any member of it.

Col. J. A. Currie (St. Patrick) got into the argument later, in an effort, as he stated, to clear away the cloud of suspicion that had been thrown over his name. He had been accused of lobbying for the Gas Company, he said, when, as a matter of fact, he had never done a bit of lobbying in his life.

Needs No Lawyer.

Deliberate attempts had been made, he charged, to "put him in wrong." In conclusion, he asserted that he needed "no \$2,000 lawyer to come up and tell him how to vote."

George Shields, another Toronto member, hurled himself into the fray. Considerable criticism had been directed, he said, at the city, but what he wanted to know was how much the Consumers' Gas Company was paying "the lawyer who had been haunting these Parliamentary corridors for weeks?"

Premier Ferguson brought the wrangling to an end with the statement that it would not be nice to let the impression get abroad that the corridors of the Legislature were being used for an improper practice. He thought that possibly the word "lobby" had been used in an un-called-for sense, and that it was not as "sinister" in intent as it sounded.

Erroneous Impression.

"It would be a great regret," he said, "if it got around that any undue pressure is being brought to bear on members of this House."

One of the bills introduced seeks revision of the meter rental system. In explanation of the measure, Mr. Nesbitt refers to an extract from the auditor's report of 1925 which opposes the meter rental of 50 cents a month, on the ground that such a rental, if charged, should be made payable to some specific account. Through this system, he said, the notion had been widely held that the people of Toronto were paying 85 cents a thousand cubic feet for gas, whereas this was really not the case.

Merely Nominal Charge.

"The policy of the company with regard to meter rental," backers of the bill maintain, "is unsound. If the value of the gas is 103.625 cents per thousand cubic feet, then that should be the price charged, or if meter rental is charged to cover the cost of meter-reading and billing and collecting accounts, then the charge should cover only these costs, and in that case it would be merely nominal."

The other bill, regarding the Gas Company, seeks to give the City of Toronto the power to get information from the company in respect of audits of the Gas Company's books. The sponsor of the bill notes that in 1887, when the Gas Company applied for legislation increasing their capital to \$2,000,000, the city, on behalf of the ratepayers, who were interested in keeping down the price of gas, opposed the legislation, and procured the insertion of clauses "designed to cheapen the price of gas."

Provision for Auditor.

One of these clauses provided that an auditor might be appointed by the city to be present at the company's annual audit for the purpose of verifying the company's annual statement, he said, and to have access to the company's books and accounts.

"The power of having an auditor attend the company's annual audit," says the sponsor, "for the purpose of verifying the company's annual statement, has proved practically valueless in so far as the regulation of the price of gas is concerned."

And so, he says, in order to make effective the audit, which was provided for by the old clause, and which, according to a judgment by the Privy Council, was put in for the very purpose of giving the city a check on the price of gas, the city is asking for a new clause.

Company's Objection.

The company in the past, it is said, objected to allowing the city a general power to audit the books on the ground that to allow auditors access to the books at any time would interfere with and disrupt its audit. Under this proposed legislation the company will have in its own hands power to prevent such interference with its organization by furnishing the city annually with the information it requires.