

# SCHOOL BOARDS BILL FOR STUDY BY PEOPLE WITH CHANGES SHOWN

## Ferguson's Plan to Give Measure Second Reading Altered by Sinclair's Views

### "LOCAL OPTION" LIKELY

Premier Ferguson's much-discussed Township School Board Bill was the chief topic of consideration in the Legislature yesterday, and will be further talked over today.

Yesterday when the bill came up for second reading, Premier Ferguson explained that he proposed to have the measure thoroughly gone into in the House, and then withdrawn and submitted again to the study of the people of the Province. Last year the measure had been introduced and then withdrawn at second reading. This year he thought that second reading might be given to the bill. It would then go to committee. Various amendments, some already suggested, some that would crop up in discussion, might be put in the measure. Then it would be withdrawn and submitted to the public again in this advanced stage.

Having made known his proposition the Premier proceeded to discuss his bill at length. Opposition and Government members followed to express their views on the matter. Then, as the hour of adjournment was neared and second reading of the bill was called William E. N. Sinclair, Liberal Leader, pointed out some facts which changed the situation.

#### Liberal Leader's Views.

If, he noted, second reading was given, it meant that the members of the Legislature had expressed their approval of the measure. If the bill was submitted to the public as approved by the House, it would not be in keeping with the thought that it was withdrawn from the Legislature in an attempt to gauge and build up public opinion in the Province. If the measure was to be withdrawn, he thought, it should be before second reading.

Premier Ferguson agreed that this was "a wise suggestion." Mr. Sinclair, who had views to express in connection with the principle of the bill, then adjourned the debate on the second reading to continue it today.

The Prime Minister later intimated to the press that the bill would be withdrawn, as suggested, without second reading. The amendments, which were to be made in committee, would be inserted in italics to show that they were not a regular, but suggested, part of the measure, and the whole would go to the public.

The amendments will have to do with financial affairs involved in the project. One suggestion which will probably be made in the amendments is that there be a form of local option in the township school board plan, that it be optional with districts to adopt the system.

Members discussing the matter yesterday suggested such "local option." The Premier, while objecting that it meant "a checkerboard system," thought that it was at least a matter for serious consideration.

#### Premier's Remarks.

In discussing the bill yesterday Premier Ferguson reviewed the origin and history of rural school sections. In 1846 an effort to systematize educational affairs resulted in the formation of boards, each having three Trustees. Rural sections still retain this old method, but urban sections made changes of a progressive nature.

The Premier drew attention to the fact that Toronto had twelve School Sections at one time.

At the present time, he stated, there were 900 schools in the Province with a population of less than 10 pupils in a school. Those 900 schools are costing the Province a million dollars.

Sixty per cent. of all rural schools have less than 20 pupils. There are 200 schools in the Province each having less than 5 pupils.

#### One Pupil Cost \$1,000.

The Premier pointed out that in his own riding last year there was a school with one pupil, which cost the School Section \$1,000.

Cost of educating pupils in the 200 schools with less than 5 of a population was \$250 a year, and in schools with less than 10 pupils \$145 a year. The average cost over all rural schools is \$87 a year. As far as Government grants were concerned, the Government cost per pupil in the schools with less than five population was about \$100, as compared with \$18 of an average on all rural schools.

The situation in the rural parts of the Province, said he, showed clearly that something must be done. He noted that the attitude of the public had altered since the township school board proposal was first made, and was "becoming more sympathetic."

If, said Mr. Ferguson, community matters, such as highway work, etc., were managed by Township Councils, why should not educational affairs be managed by township school boards? He also emphasized that educational advantages should be extended to rural districts just as the advantages of Hydro had been extended to them.

#### Urges Advantages.

The township school board system, said he, would mean greater economy in the management of schools, and that the cost of maintenance would be reduced, and it would provide opportunities for advanced education in rural districts on a much improved scale. It would mean a saving in cost of buildings and equipment and a better allocation of teachers in the township.

The Premier emphasized that while the proposals might mean a consolidation of educational activities, it was no move for consolidated schools. "It is an entirely different proposition," said he. "Consolidated schools cannot be established with economy in all sections. There are a few cases where consolidated schools have been established in advance of their time."

The township school board system, he went on, would mean the elimination of weakness in the rural educational system, an equalization of assessment, and the locating of schools where they would best serve the public.

#### Inclusion of Urban Features.

The township system allowed for graded schools, in which could be put features found in urban high schools, such as physical culture for boys, household science for girls. With these features of urban education would be linked up special agricultural work. He noted the anomaly that "to educate a boy for rural life, you have to send him to an urban community." His proposal would do away with this.

M. E. Scott (Liberal, South Oxford) referred to a situation in his riding. Several school sections opposed the plan on the ground that, while they had good buildings, they would be assessed for the rebuilding of a poor near-by structure.

Mr. Ferguson replied that some tribunal would be provided for the adjustment of financial difficulties.

The educational method of township school boards, he went on, was in vogue in Manitoba, British Columbia, twenty States in the Union and in county units throughout England and Ireland. And in these places there was no attempt to revert to former systems.

J. G. Lethbridge (Progressive, West Middlesex) thought that the "efficiency of the little red school-house is well maintained." Mr. Ferguson replied that he was not trying to detract from the efficiency of such schools.

Mr. Lethbridge continued to suggest that there be some form of local option in connection with the project.

#### Road Conditions Might Hinder.

Charles G. Fletcher (Liberal, Essex South) thought that the condition of roads in the back country might prevent the success of the township school board plan, even as it hindered the full success of the consolidated school system. In connection with the Premier's project he thought the boards should be of reasonable size, that all sections should have representation on the boards, and that the township, and not part of the township, be the unit.

Leopold Macaulay, Conservative member for South York, said that the bill certainly "met the aspirations of the semi-urban townships." The time had come for a change, he said, and, while all Trustees would not vote for the proposed new system, they would in time, he believed, realize its merits and the benefits to be derived from it.

C. A. Robertson (Liberal, North Huron) could not see, he said, where rural opinion in favor of the bill had increased any in the last year. He strongly advised the Government, before making the bill law, to place a valuation on the assets and liabilities of the various sections involved. This, he contended, would tend to eliminate petty jealousies that might otherwise creep in.

D. M. Ross (Progressive, North Oxford) suggested that half a dozen townships be selected to try out the system for two or three years.

Hon. George S. Henry, Minister of Public Works and Highways, then took a hand in the discussion to emphasize the Premier's argument.

F. G. Sandy (Progressive, South Victoria) thought that the Government should have some control over the sometimes unnecessary construction of schools in rural districts.

R. H. Kemp (Progressive, Lincoln) sketched the conditions in his riding that the new bill applied to.

E. Proulx (Liberal, Prescott) suggested that there be some provision for an optional adoption of the township school board system.

# BILL SEEKS CONTROL OF FREIGHT VEHICLES

## Law Regulating Passenger Bus Traffic Inadequate to Cope With Situation

Hon. George S. Henry, Minister of Highways, introduced into the Legislature yesterday a bill which would provide the Government with controlling power over vehicular freight-carrying business, similar to that which exercises at the present time over public vehicle passenger transportation.

Mr. Henry told the House that it was the Government's intention to place the new act on the Statute books, subject to proclamation, and intimated further that no attempt would be made to operate it this year. Apparently the Government's intention is to conduct an educational campaign first.

Just now, the Government really has no authority over this rapidly growing freight-carrying business. The law which regulates the passenger bus traffic, and to some extent, express transportation, is totally inadequate, departmental officials say, to cope with the freight situation.