

Friday, Feb. 17th

Mr. Belanger began his discussion of the "bilingual" question with the statement that, whatever might be said of him, he could not be called "coward." The findings of the Merchant Committee in its last inquiry had conformed "to the hilt" with representations made by him in the House in 1925. "A new start," he said, "has been made. The door is open. I trust that the Government will not be content to halt on the threshold."

Last year, he maintained, Ontario stepped into line with other countries in the world which had the same problem of "dual racial groups" with which to deal. While the Prime Minister, in 1925, had claimed that Ontario was not a bilingual Province, he wished to point out that it was—in fact, if not in law. One-tenth of the population, he said, was French. Citing treaties creating Czechoslovakia and other new countries established after the World War, he explained that in each country the rights of minority national groups are protected by guarantees that their children should be taught, in their early years, the language of the home, but that the State might decree compulsory tuition in the official language of the country.

#### Should Extend Principles.

"Surely," said Mr. Belanger, "if people who only yesterday had no desire but to exterminate each other could reach an agreement, what about us in Ontario, where there is no need of a league of peace between us whose fathers shared equally in the honor of laying the foundations of this Province, and whose sons died side by side in Flanders fields? Surely, in Ontario, these principles should not be restricted, but, rather, extended."

The speaker made it plain that, while in his opinion, the evils of the old Regulation 17 arrangement had not been cured, nor objectives reached, French-Canadians co-operated "immediately and spontaneously" with the recent change—"not," he said, "because we believe that all our problems are solved, but because we believe that we have at last achieved a common ground from which to direct an inquiry toward the real solution of the bilingual question in Ontario."

#### Laura Secord in French.

Col. J. A. Currie, Toronto-St. Patrick's, asked what objective the Russell member had in mind.

"I don't mind telling you," came the prompt reply. "Our children should have with your children an equal opportunity to acquire an equal education, and a mental and moral foundation. When we are trying to imbue our children with the history of the country, we do not want them hampered with the particulars of a language they, at that age, must know imperfectly." The same argument, he said, could be applied to the teaching of geography. He cited the story of Laura Secord as one which—if its value and its spirit were to live—had to be told in an impressionistic manner to the youth—in a manner which details from the English instruction book could not achieve.

"Then you think it should be taught in French?" asked George Shields, Toronto-Woodbine.

"Exactly that," said Mr. Belanger. "It should be taught in the language the child best understands." It was his contention that history should be taught in French, with the English vocabulary given afterward. Teaching of French, he said, did not interfere with the teaching of English, any more than did the study of French with the study of English. As a matter of fact, he said, French was largely the basis of English. Sixty-eight per cent. of the words in the first column of the Speech from the Throne (as printed in The Ontario Gazette) were words of French origin. (Applause).

"A bilingual speech," smiled Premier Ferguson.

From the Government benches came a reference to the bilingual report of 1927 and its findings with regard to Russell and Prescott.

Mr. Belanger replied vigorously. If, said he, there was anything wrong in Russell and Prescott, it was because there was a lack of properly trained teachers—educationalists trained to teach both English and French. In Essex, he went on, with teachers recruited from the Sandwich training school, if the pupils were progressing in English, it was at the expense of losing their own mother tongue. "The great asset of their mother language is lost to them," he added.

#### No Reason to Lose Asset.

"We claim," he said, "that there is no reason why they should lose that asset while your children in your high schools are making futile efforts to learn that language."

"If," he continued, "there are schools in Eastern Ontario where English is being properly taught, where we are producing as good results as you in your public schools without losing our mother tongue, we have nothing to be grateful for to the succession of Governments and Departments of Education. But that development was through our own efforts."

Replying to Government queries Mr. Belanger declared emphatically: "Regulation 17, where it has been applied, has been a failure. We have refused to obey Regulation 17."

He voiced the thought: "It would be a crime against our children if for a few paltry grants we submitted to Regulation 17."

#### "Dawn of New Day."

"But," he continued, "I believe we see the dawn of a new day. Means are being taken to train our teachers."

He closed with an appeal to the members of the Legislature. He invited them to visit the schools in question, as the Commissioners had done, to go into the whole matter thoroughly before taking a stand or action. It was the duty of every member to be a leader in his community. And having studied the bilingual question "on the ground" the members should go to their districts and lead in shaping opinion.

"Out of this," Mr. Belanger concluded, "will come harmony. A new spirit, a better and greater Canadian citizenship in the Province of Ontario."

R. H. Kemp (Progressive, Lincoln), continuing the debate, noted that he was following the best orator in the House.

#### Hydro Criticized.

Mr. Kemp brought to the attention of the members the subject of rural school taxation. Then he spoke of J. P. Earngey's picture of the men on the outposts in Northern Ontario. There were men on the outposts in Southern Ontario—farmers on the back concessions. And such farmers were not getting real benefits from the rural Hydro extension, Mr. Kemp declared.

"If you were 1,500 feet from a power line you couldn't get service on one contract." Some farmers had to put two or three contract mortgages on their property to get Hydro. This, he declared, was a matter that should be straightened out by legislation. Hamlets, villages, reaped benefit from rural Hydro lines. Such lines were used only partially for farmers, said he. "Only a small percentage of Hydro distribution on rural lines ever gets to the farmer," he emphasized. If, he added, things went along at the present

rate of progress it would be a hundred years before the folks in Northern Ontario got Hydro.

Next, on the subject of old-age pensions, Mr. Kemp scored the Government for its attitude. If charity organizations carried on the work, the Government would be paying 100 per cent., but if the suggested plans were adopted the Federal authorities would contribute 50 per cent.

Mr. Kemp dealt briefly with the Government's liquor business. "There is a 'Liquor Control Act,'" said he, "but there is a question mark after control. There is a 'Strong Man,' but there is another question mark there."

W. G. Martin (Conservative, Brantford) censured Liberal Leader Sinclair for stating that he could not find much meat in the Speech from the Throne. "Of course," said Mr. Martin, "any one who lacks insight may make such a remark." He suggested that Mr. Sinclair had been wasting the House's time when he quoted the Mother Hubbard rhyme about the bare cupboard. In fact, said he, the civil servants bowling in the new block were spending their time to much better advantage than the Liberal Leader. He thought that the Government members might decide their problems over a game of bowls.

#### Bowling or Caucus?

Mr. Sinclair wondered if bowling would be more congenial for them than the last caucus. Mr. Martin retorted that the last caucus had been "a most enjoyable affair."

Following dinner, Mr. Martin resumed his speech to a "thin" House. He expressed the belief that one of

the greatest businesses of the present day was the tourist business, and said that "we must reach out and get our share of it. We have the goods, and we should make the most of them. We have Commissions for one thing and another. Why not appoint a Commission to advertise our scenic heritage clear across the world? Every effort should be made by the Department of Game and Fisheries, he said, to improve fishing in the North."

On the question of education, Mr. Martin stressed the value of teaching love of home, which, he said, would mean the saving of the home from "the wretchedness of the divorce courts of the United States." Something else that had to be done, he said, was to create in the pupils a proper love of country.

#### Disagrees With Belanger.

Mr. Martin was unable to agree with Mr. Belanger that Ontario was a bilingual Province. If the population was split 50-50, such might be the case, but with one-tenth French and the remainder English, "the people," he said, "must learn English."

"Whatever policy the Government adopts," he said, "the fundamental statute must remain unaltered. The schools must be taught English—no bluff about it."

While agreeing with the Russell member that teaching of history should not be hampered by difficulties of language, he feared that many pupils who did not take up English when they were young would not take it up later. Possibly, he said, this condition accounted for so many pupils leaving school in French-speaking counties to the east with practically no knowledge of the English language.

Mr. Martin sat down. Then rose again to move his amendment, which was seconded by J. F. Reid (Conservative, Windsor West), and read as follows: "That all the words in the amendment after the first word 'that' be struck out and the following substituted therefor: 'The following clause be added to the Address: 'This House receives with satisfaction the announcement that steps are being taken to gather information regarding the better care of our dependent aged population, so that the people of the Province may have a proper understanding of the importance of this great problem and of the financial obligation to be assumed by them under a plan of old-age pensions, framed to meet the needs of this Province and to receive the approval of this Legislature.'"

E. Blake Miller (Liberal, East Elgin) moved the adjournment of the debate.

It will resume next Tuesday.