

Saturday, Feb. 25th

He referred to Mr. McCrea's motion. "If," said he, "Mr. McCrea is going to persist this is going to carry. For everybody here is ready to say aye when Mr. McCrea says aye, and nay when he says nay." Why, said he, one Conservative had voted against the Chairman's ruling, and Mr. McCrea checked him up so that he corrected himself with an "aye."

"Political," he Says.

The committee, Mr. Sinclair declared hotly, was not a "committee of inquiry," but a "political committee," and the people of the Province might as well realize that it was the Tory majority dominating the Opposition minority. "This section of the Government," as he referred to the majority, "is fighting every inch of the way to prevent any inquiry into the ballots."

"Don't say that," Mr. McCrea protested.

Mr. Sinclair reiterated his views of the situation, and declared: "The inquiry could have been completed by this time if it had not been the determination of the Government that there be no inquiry."

"Suppose," said the Liberal Leader, "I produce my ballots, you will—"

"You don't know the mind of the General Committee," came a protest.

Mind of Tory Party.

"I know the mind of the committee, all right," retorted Mr. Sinclair, amid the laughter of his followers. "It is the mind of the Tory party at large in the Province of Ontario."

Mr. McCrea charged that the Liberal Leader was blocking the inquiry to get a political advantage, and he meant to see to it "that not even the Leader of the Opposition be exempt from the ordinary rules of procedure adopted in every court in the land."

Then came more cross-fire between the Liberal chief and the Cabinet Minister.

Finally Mr. Sinclair said: "I've been made a witness, and now I'm on my way to the gallows. I am known the length and breadth of the Province, and I will be better known if you go on with this fool play. Do all you like. I was and am now willing to co-operate in every way. Produce your ballots and I'll produce mine."

If, said he, he was at fault, so was the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery for not having the ballot boxes in the room. Mr. McCrea pointed out that Clerk Bulmer was on hand and the boxes were in an adjoining room. But Mr. Sinclair emphasized that they were to be in the committee room, not somewhere near by.

The Liberal Leader persisted that if he was at fault so was the Clerk. "And," he added, "if we are ordered out of the Legislature it will look very nice with the Clerk in his gown and with me in civilian clothes."

More argument followed, with Edmond Proulx (Liberal, Prescott) and Mr. Costello entering into the discussion. Finally Mr. McCrea's motion was put to the committee, and carried by a vote of 16 to 9. The motion provided that the committee adjourn, and it did so automatically without considering Mr. Sinclair's written motion.

Back to Legislature.

When the Legislature met in the afternoon Mr. Macdarmid gave a brief summary of the progress made to date by the Privileges and Elections Committee.

From J. H. Mitchell (Liberal, South-west Simcoe) the House had the assertion that the committee at its morning session had seemed more anxious to put Mr. Sinclair on trial than to ferret out the truth how the ballots "had got out of the ballot box." If, he said, the Government was sincere in its assurance of a prompt and thorough inquiry it should get down to business "and quit jockeying for position."

Thomas M. Costello (Conservative, South Renfrew), and the committee member who last Tuesday moved the resolution that Mr. Sinclair be subpoenaed to produce his 19 ballots at the next meeting, alleged before the House that the Liberal Leader had had his "bluff called."

"I think," said he, "that the member for South Ontario realizes that there was nothing behind his insinuations and is now trying to place himself as a martyr before the people. "We called his bluff in committee this morning. He said he'd bring his ballots when the others were produced. We had the boxes there."

Where? Asks Sinclair.

"In what part of Committee Room No. 1 did you have them?" asked Mr. Sinclair.

Mr. Costello tried to answer the question by saying that members of the committee had heard from the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, at the committee meeting, where the boxes were.

"Answer my question?" said Mr. Sinclair.

Mr. Costello kept to the same tack.

"I'm asking you a straight question," said the Liberal Leader. "If you can't answer it, don't try."

Edmond Proulx (Liberal, Prescott) stressed the point that his Leader was not "on trial." He submitted that Mr. Sinclair had made out a prima facie case when he had produced the ballots in the House during the debate.

"There is not a tittle of evidence before the committee to that effect," Mr. McCrea put in.

"I'm coming to that," said Mr. Proulx.

"Well, come," said Mr. McCrea.

At some length, Mr. McCrea condemned what he termed the "haggling tactics" of the Liberal Leader. First, he said, Mr. Sinclair would not divulge the name of the man who had sent him the ballots. Then he would not produce them. References by Mr. McCrea to his examination of Mr. Sparks during the morning brought from Mr. Sinclair the indignant assertion:

"Are you trying to convey to the House that Mr. Sparks is a dishonest man?"

"No," said Mr. McCrea, "but I am

trying to convey to this committee that the man who supplied you with the ballots with which you shout 'Crime!' has not supplied us with a tittle of evidence on which we can get anywhere."

Mr. McCrea assailed Mr. Sinclair's "petty technicality" stand on the subpoena question, and said that neither the committee nor the House would be halted by any "hair-splitting."

"Much Ado About Nothing."

Peter W. Pearson (Liberal, North York) thought that the time of the House was being taken up with "much ado about nothing." He came from County Councils, he said, where there were no political dealings, passions or prejudices, and where no one was afraid that the other fellow would get ahead of him.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" gibed the Conservative benches.

It was difficult, he said, to reconcile Premier Ferguson's prompt and pleasing assurance of an investigation into the ballots affair with the tirade which he launched only a day or so later against the Liberal Leader.

"Do you want me to tell you why I did that?" said the Prime Minister.

"Delighted," said Mr. Pearson.

Questions Mr. Pearson.

Mr. Ferguson explained that it was only after he had heard of Mr. Sinclair's attitude in committee that he had said what he had said. Then, addressing Mr. Pearson, he asked: "Tell me what would you do if you were the man who had those ballots in his possession. Be frank, now. Wouldn't you produce them?"

"Without a shadow of a doubt," said Mr. Pearson, "because I am a simple-minded man. I do not think my friends on the other side of the House would use any political trickery to take any advantage of my experience."

"You don't know them as well as I do," rejoined Mr. Sinclair.

Aurelien Belanger (Liberal, Russell) recalled the investigation of the Public Accounts Committee some years ago into the activities of a former Treasurer. In that inquiry, said he, "those that laid the charges were those that conducted the investigation and placed the evidence before the committee." But things were different, said he, when the suggestion of an inquiry came from the Opposition side of the House.

Mr. Belanger referred to the Premier's "tirade" against the Liberal Leader, remarks which, he thought, were "out of order" since the principle of a bill was up for discussion. In view of that tirade, seeming to put Mr. Sinclair on his defense, said Mr. Belanger, the Liberal Leader was perfectly right in taking "every precaution" in the committee, and he was entitled to the same right that the minority conceded the majority in the Public Accounts Committee.

Should Remain as Plaintiff.

Mr. McCrea shot across a trio of questions. Mr. Belanger stood by his guns in vigorous defense of Mr. Sinclair's attitude. Mr. Sinclair, said he, owed it to his own dignity not to be turned by the power of a majority from plaintiff to accused.

John G. Lethbridge, Progressive Leader, thought the whole affair had been turned into "a legal and political squabble."

It mattered little whether or not the subcommittee saw Mr. Sinclair's ballots, he thought. Its business was to scrutinize the ballot boxes. The people of the Province were demanding a "clean-up."

Mr. McCrea asked the Progressive Leader what would he do if he had the nineteen ballots.

Mr. Belanger objected to a "hypothetical question."

Mr. Lethbridge replied that if he was in the same circumstances as the Liberal Leader he might proceed in the same way.

"Aren't we entitled to see the ballots as much as reporters or photographers?" said Hon. Joseph E. Thompson (Conservative, Toronto-St. David's).

Why See the Ballots?

Leslie W. Oke (U.F.O., East Lambton) had a new question for the Government members. "May I ask," said he, "why they want to see these ballots? And if they did see them could they tell whether they were regular or irregular?"

"We'd like to see these ballots," said Mr. McCrea, "so we'd have the same chance as the newspapers to see what all the fuss is about. They may be real or faked."

Well, said Mr. Oke, the whole situation had resolved into the question of "whether the Conservative part of the committee will dominate or whether the minority will have justice." He advised the Government to go on without squabbling over political advantages and bring the investigation to a conclusion without further debate.

Mr. McCrea wondered whether Mr. Oke was directing that remark at Mr. Sinclair.

"Anywhere it will fit," retorted the U.F.O. member.

Then Mr. Ferguson, calming the troubled waters, suggested adjournment until Monday and after another little flurry of cross-fire the discussion was adjourned.

The Ballots Battle

Premier Ferguson acted wisely in deciding to adjourn the "ballots battle" at Queen's Park over the week-end. It was clear that time is needed—time to cool off; time for reflection; time to learn and to appreciate what the public is thinking and saying.

The probability is that the Government and its supporters are merely playing the old political game for party advantage—that nothing is really wrong, but that something seriously irregular has occurred. Yet their actions are suggesting to the public mind conclusions that are ugly and sinister—that there is something they are scared of, something to be sidetracked, something to be covered up.

Mr. Sinclair brought the finding of electoral ballots on the streets of Ottawa to the attention of the Legislature. Mr. Ferguson promised an immediate and thorough investigation. Both Leaders were right. Each was doing his duty. Had their action been followed by a calm, impartial, serious, judicial inquiry there is little likelihood that, barring unexpected developments, public confidence would have been disturbed.