

Wednesday, Feb. 29th

High Court Judges to Probe Ballot Mystery

COMMITTEE'S WORK IS HALTED AND INQUIRY IS TRANSFERRED TO TWO ROYAL COMMISSIONERS

Premier Ferguson Announces to Legislature That Justices Magee and Hodgins of Supreme Court Will Hold Judicial Investigation Into Events Revealed in Speech of Liberal Leader

SAYS BALLOT BOX TO BE PROTECTED

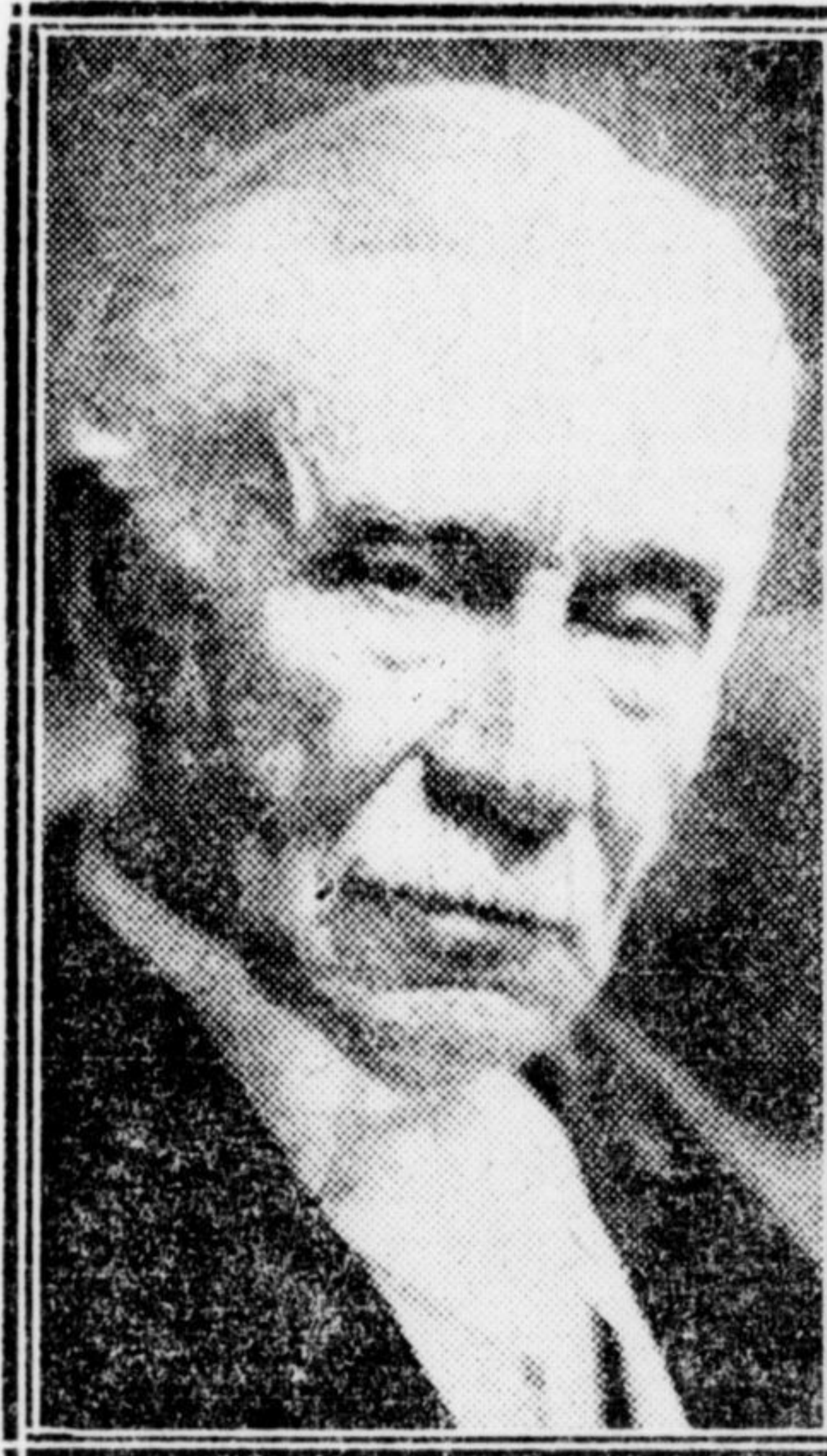
But Speeches and Actions in Committee Already Have Lent Political Color to Inquiry, Premier Asserts, and He Declares Judicial Finding Will Be More Acceptable

Investigation of the 19 "wandering ballots" from the last Provincial election in the Electoral District of South Ottawa, which has been so much in the public eye for the past two weeks, has been taken out of the hands of the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the Legislature, and will be turned over to a tribunal from the Supreme Court Bench—Hon. Mr. Justice James McGee and Hon. Mr. Justice Frank E. Hodgins. A Royal Commission will be issued immediately vesting these Judges with full authority to conduct the inquiry.

Announcement to House.

Premier G. Howard Ferguson gave this information to the Legislature yesterday in response to the appeal for "further direction from the House" which was launched last Friday by the Privileges and Elections Committee, when its members were deadlocked over the issue before them for settlement.

TO STUDY BALLOT PUZZLE



HON. JAMES MAGEE.



HON. FRANK E. HODGINS.

Premier Ferguson announced in the Legislature yesterday that the inquiry into the Ottawa ballots, started by the Committee on Privileges and Elections, would be transferred to a Royal Commission. The Commissioners will be Hon. James Magee and Hon. Frank E. Hodgins, members of the Supreme Court of Ontario, Appellate Division.

In reviewing the "ballots case" in the House yesterday, Mr. Ferguson expressed the belief that Mr. Sinclair's stand in the matter—the tenor of certain of his utterances, and his allowing certain newspapers to photograph the ballots for purposes of reproduction—had lent a political or party coloring to the situation which had not made for judicial treatment of the matter. The mental attitude of certain sections of the committee, not to speak of that of the general public, had become agitated and high strung, and he no longer thought that the committee could bring in a report that would prove acceptable.

"I think," said Mr. Ferguson, "in the general public interest we want to maintain the highest possible standard of morality in the public life of this Province. We are desirous of purging the air of any suspicion of impropriety or irregularities whatsoever in connection with this matter. The Government has given the matter very serious consideration, and we have reached the conclusion that the Privileges and Elections Committee shall no longer carry on the inquiry, but that it shall be proceeded with before a tribunal of members from

the Bench; that Judges should be asked to hear all evidence, so that a finding may be returned which will be agreeable to the general public, and so that the most extreme critics of the Government will not have the opportunity of saying that the Government is hiding something or is shielding anything behind the actions of a committee in which it may have a majority of members."

Protection of Ballot.

Mr. Ferguson, before announcing the personnel of the tribunal, invited the fullest co-operation of the House in order to get to the bottom of a matter which he thought might not be as serious as it looked on the surface. Protection of the ballot, he said, was sacred, and nothing should be left undone to preserve that sacredness or to protect it against suspicion.

The Commissioners, he said, would be asked to investigate thoroughly every phase of the ballots mystery, and to deal with the matter "in a way, I hope, which will not be discreditable to any one connected with the whole transaction."