

FUTURE SHORTAGE OF ELECTRIC POWER IS FACING ONTARIO

Premier Ferguson Views Situation With Alarm—Expects Exact Definition of Federal and Provincial Rights by Christmas Time — Co-operation With Quebec on Ottawa

RURAL PROBLEMS BEING CONSIDERED

Alarm over the power situation in the Province—fear of a power shortage—was expressed by Premier Ferguson in the Legislature yesterday afternoon.

The Prime Minister's remarks were occasioned during consideration of the supplementary estimates for the Hydro-Electric Power Commission. He spoke in detail of the various developments throughout Ontario, touching on the international, interprovincial and Provincial phases of the power situation.

When he had referred to the Gatineau contract and explained the distribution of the "juice" to be thus obtained, William E. N. Sinclair, Liberal Leader, asked: "Suppose we get the St. Lawrence development, what are we going to do with this?"

Lack, Not Surplus.

"I hope," replied the Premier, "that we can keep it. We are not worrying over any surplus. With the rapid increase in the use of power, we may face the future rather with alarm, as to where we may look for power. You must remember that Ontario gets nothing like what Quebec gets from the St. Lawrence development."

Referring to the interprovincial power situation, and the framing of questions in an attempt to define Provincial rights, the Premier pointed out that the questionnaire was being revised, that it would be presented to the Supreme Court in May, that it would be appealed before the Privy Council next fall and that by Christmas time there should be an exact definition of the rights of the Dominion and the Province regarding the distribution of power.

\$400,000 for Niagara.

Supplementary estimates to the extent of \$2,470,000 were passed in connection with the Hydro-Electric Power Commission's work by the House in committee. The first item of this was \$400,000 for the Niagara system. This, Premier Ferguson explained, was to supplement \$600,000 in the estimates for transmission and distribution lines and extension to the rural distribution system.

Progressive Leader Lethbridge wondered if there was any possibility of a farmer getting a lighter service, when he didn't want the 3-horsepower service. That, said Mr. Ferguson, was a suggestion that was now being considered by the Commission. He intimated that there might be an announcement of some move which would benefit rural districts.

Also Being Considered.

R. H. Kemp (Progressive, Lincoln) referred to the difference in service charges, which made the fruit farmer bear a heavier burden of expense than the grain farmer. That, said the Premier, in reply, was also being considered by the Commission along with a number of matters which had emanated from the present session of the Legislature.

Next came an item of \$75,000 for the Georgian Bay system, the Premier explaining that it was to provide for an increase in load and 62 miles extension of rural lines.

Then, in connection with the St. Lawrence and Ottawa systems, the committee passed \$350,000 for transformer stations and \$1,250,000 for transmission and distribution lines.

In this connection Mr. Ferguson referred to the Gatineau contract, explaining how the power was to be brought to Leaside and then shot into the Niagara and Central systems.

Cheaper Than Development?

He was questioned as to whether the Government was buying the power cheaper than they could develop it. "I wouldn't like to say offhand," he replied, "but we are buying it cheaper than ever before." The line was under construction and it was hoped that the juice would go on next fall. The system was being built so as to be able to carry more power than contracted for at present.

Mr. Ferguson intimated that with co-operation between Quebec and Ontario this Province might take advantage of the Ottawa power sources within three years, providing, of course, that the decision of the Privy Council gave "the Provinces the rights we now believe we have."

The Premier spoke at length of the St. Lawrence waterways project. He noted that as far as Canadian authorities were concerned, there had been no extensive reports dealing with the economic phase of the problem, all the information on this "angle" coming from the United States. He referred to the work of the Advisory Committee, stating that he had written Premier King asking that a copy of the committee's report be given to the Ontario Legislature.

Conference First.

The Federal Prime Minister had replied that he was unable to do this because the matter was an international one and the contents of the report could not be made public until there was a conference with Washington.

The committee then passed \$125,000 for transformer stations and \$240,000 for transmission lines for the Central Ontario system; \$20,000 for the Nipissing, and \$10,000 for the Sault Ste. Marie district. Referring to the Nipissing situation the Premier pointed out that new sources of power had to be sought and that there might have to be development of Elliot Shutes. Development in the Central district linked up with the construction following the Gatineau contract.

Refers to Sault Situation.

Hon. H. C. Nixon (Progressive, Brant) wanted the Premier to explain the recent power battle at the Sault. Mr. Ferguson stated that the situation involved the difficulties which always crop up when power matters get into municipal politics. "It is a long story and an interesting one," said he, and continued with a brief sketch. He referred to the question which confronted the people as to whether they accept the offer of the Hydro or the Lake Superior Corporation. There had been talk of how industries would be extended and payrolls increased. "At any rate," Mr. Ferguson summed up, "they chose to accept the other contract."

Headlines in Newspapers

Criticized by Mr. Henry

The suggestion in the newspaper headlines over a story of the last meeting of the Public Accounts Committee, that no tenders were called for work in connection with the East Block, was protested by Hon. George S. Henry, Minister of Public Works and Highways, in the Legislature yesterday. The Minister explained that it was only the excavation work that had not been subject to tenders, and that the Government had conducted this work to relieve the unemployment situation.

SINCLAIR PROTESTS PRINCIPLE INVOLVED IN INSURANCE BILL

Liberal Leader Pleads for Protection of "Little Fellow"

PASSES HOUSE COMMITTEE

Attorney-General Price's bill to amend the Insurance Act passed Committee of the Legislature yesterday, but not without a warm protest from Liberal Leader Sinclair against "the principle involved."

Mr. Sinclair charged that the amendment simply meant that in future the "little fellow's" insurance business would be transferred to the "big fellow." In reply to statements of the Attorney-General last week, that the bill aimed at the man who insured his own property or relatives, and got a "fat" commission at the expense of bona fide agents, Mr. Sinclair said:

"Sound Legal Doctrine."

"Why shouldn't a man be his own insurance agent? It's good, sound legal doctrine. If I own 25 houses, why can't I become an agent and insure them?"

Mr. Sinclair further submitted that the Government was endeavoring to look after "the big interests." His only hope was that the Superintendent of Insurance, in whom the amendment vested wide powers, would "see to it" that the "little fellow" wasn't entirely eliminated.

"No chance of that," said Col. Price.

After prophesying that within a year's time the Government would be experiencing plenty of complaint regarding the act, the Liberal Leader attacked the Ministry for holding back such important legislation until the fag-end of the session. He said that it wasn't fair to the Province that the Insurance Act, for instance, had been held back and then rushed through.

Only Two Complaints.

Premier Ferguson said the bill could go on to third reading, and then, if the Liberal Leader had any amendments to propose, it could be moved back to committee. He said that the press had carried information regarding the bill last fall, and the Superintendent of Insurance had had several conferences regarding its drafting. He thought that the people were pretty well agreed on it; in fact, he had had only two complaints about its make-up. These had come from "small agents," who, when assured that there was no intention on the part of the Government to put them out of business, had withdrawn their objections.

Premier Vexed

Premier Ferguson, in the Legislature yesterday, indirectly threw out a warning to the class of member who absents himself from the House on Monday.

"How members expect," he said, "to get legislation expedited when they are not in their seats, I don't know. There isn't one private member who has a public order before the House, here this afternoon. Consequently we cannot make any progress."