

Friday, March 30th

AFTER HOT ATTACK, LIQUOR LAW CHANGE PASSES COMMITTEE

Amendment Allows Control Board to "Bulk" Returns From Stores in Annual Reports — Public Should Have Information, Declares Sinclair, About "People's Business"

OTHER CHANGES NOT CHALLENGED

By a standing vote of 49 to 25, the Ontario Legislature yesterday carried past committee stage a Liquor Control Act amendment which will make it possible for the Hanna Commission, in all its future annual reports, to "bulk" returns from the various stores in the Province, instead of submitting a statement of sales and revenue from each individual shop.

The Government group voted solidly for the amendment. The Liberals and Progressives and the U.F.O. members in the House, with the exception of Leslie W. Oke (East Lambton), voted that it be struck out. Although it was Progressive Leader Lethbridge who moved that it be thrown overboard, it was Liberal Leader Sinclair who voiced the most strenuous objection to it.

"People's Business."

Mr. Sinclair took the ground that it would weaken confidence in the administration of the act, and that it would deprive the people of information from the "people's business," which they had every right to have. Before the argument closed, Attorney-General Price, sponsor of the amendment, and Premier Ferguson were into it "up to their necks," and the cold, lifeless House atmosphere of the past two weeks had been converted into midsummer heat with the principals in the debate "going for each other" at every opportunity.

On one occasion Mr. Sinclair, nettled by the Prime Minister's tactics, referred to the latter as "Mr. I."

"My honorable friend needn't be impertinent," the Premier shot back, "just because he knows how."

Many "Orders!"

The "Order!" which Hon. Joseph E. Thompson, Chairman of the committee, interpolated was only one of many he had to issue during the afternoon. On another occasion both Mr. Sinclair and Attorney-General Price were on their feet expostulating.

"Sit down," said Mr. Sinclair to Col. Price.

"You sit down," replied the Attorney-General.

"You both sit down," cried Mr. Thompson. "I'll decide this!"

While the fireworks were touched off by the amendment heretofore specified,

discussion gradually veered to the question of whether the Liquor Control Act passed last session had stipulated that the board should submit a report for the five months of operation ending October 31, 1927. Mr. Sinclair said it did. Col. Price said, in effect, that it didn't, but that, for the benefit of the Legislature, he had asked for a statement.

"That report did not give the information required by the law," said Mr. Sinclair. "It is in keeping with the legislation about to be passed—not with legislation that has been passed."

Other Amendments.

Three other important amendments to the act were permitted to pass unchallenged by the Opposition. These were as follows:

"Except as otherwise provided by this act, or by the regulations, a druggist or manufacturer of patent or proprietary medicines may sell such medicine in the original and unbroken package—if such medicine contains sufficient medication to prevent its use as an alcoholic beverage."

"Any person who obtains or consumes for beverage purposes any of the products mentioned in Sections 62 or 63, or who obtains or consumes for such purposes any of the products mentioned in Section 64, shall be guilty of an offense, and liable to the penalties prescribed by Subsection 3 of Section 103 of the act."

Must Be Sealed.

"No liquor shall be had or kept by any person within the Province unless the package, not including a decanter or other receptacle containing the liquor for immediate consumption, in which liquor is contained is, while containing that liquor, sealed with the official seal prescribed under the act."

In challenging the wisdom of the contentious amendment, Mr. Sinclair said: "From the standpoint of the Government itself I don't think it wise to pass this amendment. I can see no valid reason why the Government should try to hide the amount of each store's sales and revenue from the annual report."

Public Information.

The liquor business, he said, was the people's business. It was in competition with merchants the country wide, and was not a private affair. It was "nothing more than right" that the public should have the information that the Liquor Board was endeavoring to suppress.

Attorney-General Price said there were many stores which sold to people residing outside the communities in which the stores were located. At Windsor, for instance, there was a big transient trade. He didn't think it right that a report should say this store sold so much, and that store sold so much. It might place certain stores in an unfavorable light, when, as a matter of fact, a large percentage of trade done by the stores might not have been done with actual residents of the communities, but with "outsiders."

P. W. Pearson (Liberal, North York), E. Blake Miller (Liberal, East Elgin) and Progressive Leader Lethbridge warmly supported Mr. Sinclair's views. Mr. Lethbridge, seconded by R. H. Kemp (Lincoln), moved that the clause be struck out.

"Strike It Out."

Mr. Sinclair heartily concurred. "We were told before this session opened," said he, "that there would be no big amendments to the Liquor Control Act. And yet here is a big amendment. Unless the Government can give me more substantial reasons for it than the Attorney-General has advanced, I say strike it out."

Mr. Ferguson maintained that the amendment was an attempt to remove difficulties in the way of a complete and satisfactory administration of the act. Moreover, said he, it was not in the public interest to let the information regarding individual store business get abroad. "Fancy," he added, "showing that in a community there was a small sale of spirits and a large sale of beer and wine. That would practically be an invitation to the bootlegger to get into a field of that nature."

He thought that the change should be made "for the present at any rate," so that "the Commission may have the fullest opportunity of carrying out the act."

"Has anything happened to require this amendment?" Mr. Sinclair asked.

"Matter of Policy."

"No," the Premier replied. "It is just a matter of policy."

The Commission, said he, had recommended such an amendment to strengthen their hands, and the Government was acting on that suggestion.

"Why not go further," said Mr. Sinclair, "and strike out the clause so the Commission will not have to bring in any report, but just the money?"

"The Commission hasn't suggested it," retorted Mr. Ferguson.

The Liberal Leader continued to object. "This amendment will do more harm than any other you make."

Col. Price pointed out that it didn't mean any weakening of business administration, because the figures of all sales were checked by auditors.

Stores to Draw Tourists.

D. J. Taylor (Progressive, North Grey) suggested that the public should know the business of the liquor stores, because merchants could judge from the various figures the strength of tourist trade in various localities. He thought that there was an agitation for stores in some towns particularly as "a drawing card for tourist business."

APPRENTICESHIP BILL FOR BUILDING TRADES GETS SECOND READING

Endorsed by Government
and Opposition—Premier Explains

SKILLED WORKMEN CORPS

Described by Premier Ferguson as "one of the most important pieces of legislation ever brought before this House" and endorsed by both the Government and the Opposition, the bill to establish a system of apprenticeship in the building trades was given second reading in the Legislature yesterday.

Judging from the sentiment of the House, this measure, with perhaps a change or two in committee, but no interference with its principle, will become law at the end of the session.

Systematic Training.

The bill proposes an organization that will provide for the systematic training of apprentices, and the Governor-in-Council is to protect the apprentice from imposition. The Governor-in-Council may appoint a committee to be composed of employers and employees representing the trades involved and, as the scheme goes on and local committees are required, the Governor-in-Council may appoint them.

These committees will assist the boy who wants to learn a trade and help him adopt himself to his proper calling. For nine months of the building season, the apprentice will be guaranteed employment at stated wages approved by trade unions. In the off-season months he will attend technical school, where he will receive, as well as some cultural "polish," valuable, practical and theoretical training.

While it is proposed that the scheme be tried out first by the building trades, it is intended that other trades be included as time goes on.

Unanimous Approval.

Explaining the measure to the House yesterday, the Premier emphasized that both employers and employees are unanimously back of it. The plan, said he, would provide a system of vocational training which was badly needed by Ontario at the present time.

"It is hoped," Mr. Ferguson emphasized, "that we may develop what is generally needed in this country, and that is a corps of skilled workmen."

William E. N. Sinclair, Liberal Leader, voiced his approval of the measure, and joined with Mr. Ferguson in commending it to the favor of the House.