

Thursday-February-7th

# TWO ELECTION BILLS UNDER CONSIDERATION BY HOUSE COMMITTEE

## Price and Sinclair Clash Over Respective Merits of Their Measures to Prevent Any Repetition of "Wandering Ballots Mess"

### PREMIER SUGGESTS THAT THEY CONFER

The Ontario Legislature yesterday sent to a special committee of the House, whose personnel will likely be announced today, Attorney-General Price's and Liberal Leader Sinclair's bills to amend the Election Act.

In plain language, the job before the committee is to pick the best meat from the pair of measures, and from it fashion what Premier Ferguson expects to be "the best Election Act that it is possible to secure," and one, at least, which will eliminate in future any repetition of the South Ottawa "wandering ballots" mess that had the House and the Province by the ears for the greater part of the 1928 session.

Decision to call in a special committee was not reached without lengthy debate, for Mr. Sinclair claimed that the Attorney-General's bill incorporated only one of the eight recommendations made by the Royal Commission which inquired into the South Ottawa mix-up, and Colonel Price vigorously contended, in effect, that Chief Election Clerk Allan Dymond, who had drawn up the measure—an expert, in other words—knew his business, and what was best to put in the bill, and what was best to leave out.

#### "Not Very Courteous."

Some spirited clashes followed, with Mr. Sinclair alleging that the Government had been "not very courteous" in their treatment of the Royal Commissioners, after the time they had taken to frame their recommendations; with Colonel Price sticking to his guns and deprecating the suitability of several of the suggestions incorporated in Mr. Sinclair's bill; with talk of "Baldy Robb" and empty ballot boxes and dishonest appointees now and again tingling the atmosphere; and with Premier Ferguson, anxious as he was to avoid turning the argument into "a bitter party controversy," declaring that under the Conservative Government, since 1905, there had been no election scandals in Ontario, and at the same time recalling to the House the "White-Comstock election that had been managed by Mr. Sinclair's friends at Ottawa."

After Colonel Price had moved second reading of his bill, and had suggested that it be sent to committee along with the Sinclair bill, the Liberal Leader promptly took the floor, and, after announcing the fact that his measure contained every one of the Royal Commission recommendations, dilated at length on the reason for each and all of them.

One one recommendation, stressing the need of competent people as Returning Officers, Mr. Sinclair said: "Any one who could make a worse mess than Scott made in South Ottawa can't be imagined. The same thing could happen anywhere else, if these Returning Officer jobs were given to incompetent individuals."

#### Price's Respect for Both.

Commission recommendations that no returning office should be in close proximity to a political club or organization, and that a Sheriff or some other designated officer should perform the Returning Officer's duties, were also emphasized by Mr. Sinclair. Colonel Price took strong exception to the latter suggestion, maintaining that court officers had enough to do at the present time. While he had the greatest respect for the wisdom of the Commissioners, at the same time he had equal respect for the judgment of the Chief Election Clerk.

At another juncture, when the Attorney-General said that there had been dishonest appointees under the Federal Election Act, and named "Baldy of Saskatchewan" in this connection, Mr. Sinclair shouted: "Go on. Make this action as political as you can, and start all over again."

Once Mr. Sinclair had moved second reading to his bill, the Prime Minister got into the picture. The Liberal Leader, he said, had made a lengthy argument about how one might illegally control a single ballot during an election. Perhaps, said he, Mr. Sinclair was recalling "the White-Comstock election, managed by his friends in Ottawa, or perhaps he was remembering West Hastings and other places."

#### Simply Negligence.

The outstanding feature of the South Ottawa situation, he claimed, was that the Judges found no evidence of criminal act or intent—simply negligence. The Prime Minister expressed himself as doubting the wisdom (as suggested by Mr. Sinclair) of allowing any officer the right of opening election boxes without some one first making application to the courts. The public, he said, might even think it dangerous if the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery were to open sealed boxes. He believed that Mr. Sinclair was sincere in trying to prevent election illegalities, and the Government was quite as anxious to avoid such occurrences. It was advisable, he considered, that the two bills should go before a special committee of the House and that Colonel Price and Mr. Sinclair should get together and confer on the matter.

# DELUGE OF BILLS INTO LEGISLATURE

## Price Introduces Measure to Simplify Searching of Titles

### NATURAL GAS QUESTION

A flood of Government and private bills was loosed in the Ontario Legislature yesterday afternoon. For an hour the members were busy popping up to "move" new measures into action.

Then the legislative machinery started working on the proposals brought in last week, and when it was stopped for the day six bills had been given second reading and three had been approved by the House in Committee.

Among the measures reported by the committee was the "emergency" amendment to the Municipal Act which allows for the Controlship by-election in Toronto. This went through smoothly without discussion and now awaits third reading. The committee also passed the Government amendment to the Public Service Act and the bill to prevent fraud in the sale of Alberta coal.

#### Extend Gas Main Rights.

Acting for Hon. Charles McCrea, Minister of Mines, who isn't home from Bermuda yet, Premier Ferguson introduced an amendment to the Municipal Franchise Act. This has to do with the natural gas situation. Since natural gas may be combined with artificial gas, the question arose as to the rights of various companies to put mains through municipalities. Natural gas companies have that right by vote of the municipality, and this extends the same right for the carrying in mains of artificial gas or a mixture of the two. No hardship is worked on the municipalities, said the Premier, because the question of the laying of mains has still to be decided by a vote of the people.

An amendment to the Niagara Parks Act, enlarging the powers of the Commission so that it may take part in border bridge projects, was introduced by Hon. George S. Henry.

An amendment to the Assessment Act, brought in by Hon. William Finlayson, provides for a reduction of taxation on property vacated three months or over, only because of extreme poverty or sickness. It was found that owners of summer resorts claimed a reduction under the wording of the old "three months or over" section of the act. The act intended no such reduction, said the Minister, for people who own summer cottages have enough money to pay the taxes on such "luxuries."

#### Cheaper Title-Searching.

With the intention of simplifying the searching of titles of real estate, and putting it on a less costly basis, the Government introduced a bill entitled, "An act to facilitate the investigation of titles of real estate." This bill necessitates a change in the Registry Act, and so such an amendment was also brought in. Attorney-General Price, introducing these measures, said in part:

"The proposed bill to facilitate the investigation of titles limits the investigation of titles to a forty-year period. It has been felt that the forty-year period should give an indefeasible title to an owner, and if any records are clear for that period no person should be required to show title or examine records during the period in which, by the operation of other statutes, claims would be outlawed unless enforced by ordinary actions.

"It is aimed not to have this act come into force until one year after the passing thereof, so as to give people plenty of opportunity to adjust themselves to the prospective change. The passing of this law necessitates some changes in the Registry Act, in order to further simplify the searching of titles. The register is now encumbered by entries of discharges of mortgages, lis pendens, partial discharges of mortgages, mechanics' liens, judgments and orders and other similar registrations which only encumber the abstract and increase the entries.

"It is proposed that within the forty-year period, once a mortgage has been discharged and once a mechanic's lien has run its time according to the act, that the Registrar of Deeds will have the power to draw a line in red ink through all such entries."