

Friday - March 22nd.

I might say we are not wedded to it—that it would be a wise thing to say to the county authorities: Now you can appoint a board. You know your own people best, and they will make recom-

mendations to the Central Board, and be able to give them special information as to whether the pensions should pass or not. Because the Central Board must always have authority to review applications to prevent impositions. The local board may refuse an application, and the Central Board, on appeal, will have the right to take the matter up with the local board, and determine whether or not an error has been made. Or the Central Board might feel called on to make further investigation by special officers where it thinks improper representations have been made, or where the local board may have been misled.

**Will Make Them Careful.**

"Now, if honorable gentlemen agree that it is a sound principle that the local authority should have a voice in this matter, then I say, aside from the moral obligation that rests upon them to assist in the care of aged people, that they should also have some financial responsibility in the matter, so that they will be careful about it."

In reply to a question by E. Blake Miller (Liberal, East Elgin) the Premier said that, so long as a citizen fulfilled the conditions, it did not matter whether he was in a house of industry or not. He would be entitled to take the money and walk out if he pleased to do so, or he might make a bargain with the institution authorities to stay on.

Mr. Ferguson went on to explain that although the Federal legislation did not provide for money to be paid to institutions, yet, in the final analysis, with the money being paid to the individual who might choose to remain in an institution, it amounted to the same thing, and he did not anticipate any difficulty on that score.

Hon. H. C. Nixon (Progressive, Brant County) asked if this policy would apply to the Provincial hospitals, and the Premier answered yes. There was no reason, either, said the latter, why the same policy of payment should not be applied to all the homes for the aged which are to be found in the Province. All the principles of the legislation were to be found, he stated, in either the Dominion legislation or in the Mothers' Allowances Act, and the bill, as a whole, had received the approval of the Minister of Labor at Ottawa, and officials of the Department of Justice.

**Under Allowances Board?**

"The moment the House rises," he said, "we will undertake to negotiate the agreement, which is a formal thing, and start to work up the administrative machinery of the act." Powers under the act would be sufficiently wide to provide for the appointment of the wisest, most sympathetic and most sufficient tribunal that could be found to handle the legislation. It was possible—although he could not state it definitely at the present time—that the act would be put under the Mothers' Allowances Board, of which Hon. Dr. David Jamieson is the Chairman.

Mr. Ferguson stated that the survey in Ontario showed that there were 21,000 people who would likely be available for pensions. It must be remembered, said he, that there are a great many industrial firms in the Province with a pensioning system, and it could not be said exactly how they would lessen or increase the number estimated as coming under the Provincial pensions plan. There are, said he, 185,187 industrial employers in the Province. Of this number 61 firms employ 56 per cent. of the workers and those firms all have pension schemes.

He thought that there would be 1,700 people in unorganized districts who would get pensions under the Provincial plan.

He emphasized that the Government had amended the Parents Maintenance Act to compel the support of parents by the families that were financially able to do so.

**Absurd Statement.**

Of the 21,000 he referred to the majority were in urban districts, said he, but there was not a very marked difference in their locality. It was reasonable to believe, said he, that all over the country there were people with limited means living in small villages. He deemed "absurd" the statement at a Toronto Board of Control meeting that people with small means were moving into Toronto from the country.

He stated that the regulations governing the length of time of residence required as a pension qualification in a community would be worked out carefully under the proposed act.

He regretted the "absurd statements" that were "creating unrest and worry in the minds of the people" on the old-age pensions proposals. Again he referred to the statement of people of limited means coming to Toronto, and said: "Despite the attractions of this fair city, if I were free I'd hie me back to Kemptville, and I think you'll find that the other aged poor are doing the same thing."

He painted a "reasonable picture" of what would happen under the proposed act. The average pension will be about \$235. On the basis of half of this to be paid by the Province and municipalities the cost for 19,000 people in the organized districts of the Province would be \$2,235,000 and the municipalities would pay part of this. The pensions for the 1,700 people in the unorganized districts, the cost of which is borne by the Government, would total \$196,000. The total cost of pensions to the Province and municipalities would be \$2,431,000 without including the administration costs.

**\$2 for Every \$1.**

The Province would pay \$1,341,000 of the pensions for the 19,000 people and the municipalities \$894,000. Considering the whole situation, said he, the Province would be paying practically \$2 for the \$1 paid by municipalities.

Mr. Ferguson stated that he would be sorry indeed if anything but a co-operative spirit should develop in consideration of legislation of the old-age pensions type.

"Every one knows," said he, "that nobody enjoys a political battle more than I. But I confess that I don't like party divisions over what I might call social or humane problems. Let us get together and put the force of public opinion behind this."

He referred to a social side of the question, the re-assertion of self-respect in the old man and old woman when pensions were given to them as a matter of right, not philanthropy. He felt that this principle would make a great difference in the lives of these people and in the Province generally.

"I think," said he, "that the municipalities should be prepared to undertake to assist the Province. For every \$120 that is paid the Province pays \$72 or \$6 a month and the municipalities \$48 or \$4 a month. I think the municipalities should be prepared to take a financial responsibility for a reasonable portion of the cost. I hope that after the discussion we will reach a conclusion in which we unanimously concur and know that we have done a great thing for a deserving portion of our population."

**"Read a Lecture."**

Liberal Leader Sinclair referred caustically to the Prime Minister's plea for non-contentious treatment of the pensions question, adding that Mr. Ferguson had never consulted him in regard to drafting the bill now before the Legislature. He had, he said, considerable provocation to be contentious on the question, if he wanted to be, for at the introduction of the bill, the Premier had issued a statement in which he, Mr. Sinclair, had been "read a lecture."

"So," said he, "the ground apparently is not so well set that any one can ask that there be no argument on the different phases of the bill."

Mr. Sinclair agreed with the Prime Minister that the duty regarding pensions rested primarily with the State, and that the pensions, themselves, were not to be viewed in the light of doles. But, argued he, if it was the State's responsibility in the first place, and the Dominion Government had contributed 50 per cent. in that connection, surely the Province had to admit that it constituted the other half of the State. Certainly, he said, the municipalities and counties could not be classed as the State, and moreover, it was apparent from a study of the Dominion legislation that Ottawa intended that the Province should pay the other 50 per cent. of the pensions contribution.

**Quite Enough Taxation.**

"And so we oppose the 20 per cent. contribution from the municipalities," said Mr. Sinclair, "on the ground that the Federal contribution is made to obviate this very levy and on the ground that the municipalities have quite enough taxation to bear at the present time."

The Premier had made light, he stated, of the municipal levy. Well,

said Mr. Sinclair, it might be all right if taxation were low, but every one knew, he claimed, how high it was.

Mr. Sinclair contrasted Mr. Ferguson's survey figures with estimates he gave a year ago—when he had stated that more than 100,000 aged people in Ontario were eligible for pensions, and that it would cost the Province approximately \$5,000,000. Now, it was discovered, he said, that not more than 21,000 people were eligible and that the expense which the Province had figured would be far less.

Progressive Leader Lethbridge agreed with the Prime Minister that the pensions bill was one of the most important pieces of legislation that had ever come before the Ontario House. He congratulated Mr. Ferguson on his survey of the situation and on his appeal for co-operation on the scheme. The bill, he said, was "in the right direction," and one of its strongest points was the furnishing Municipal Councils with the right to appoint boards whose duty it would be to pass on all pension applications. He felt that the needs of eligible old people would be better looked after in this way. Establishment of an all-Provincial Board would have, in his opinion, afforded the municipalities the opportunity to unload many applicants on the Province.

Friday - March 22nd.

**NEW POLICY LIKELY ON HOTEL DRINKING, PREMIER ANNOUNCES**

**Control Board Probably Will Be Given Power to Regulate**

**CLAUSE IN BILL ATTACKED**

From Premier Ferguson the Ontario Legislature yesterday had the information that the Government at the present time has under contemplation some new policy on the question of liquor consumption in hotel rooms, and that it probably will be announced to the House before the present session ends.

Only recently, a cry from Ontario hotelkeepers for either a ban on room drinking or the authorization of beer and wine drinking in dining rooms was met by Mr. Ferguson with the firm declaration that if the hotelmen desired room drinking taboed their wish could be granted. And in view of his strong opposition to beer and wine by the glass, it is safe to conclude that any pronouncement he may make to the House before it rises will be in the nature of an investment of the Liquor Control Board with power to regulate this room-type of drinking.

**Bill's Second Reading.**

This intimation from the Prime Minister was elicited by Progressive Leader John G. Lethbridge during the second reading of Attorney-General Price's bill amending the Liquor Control Act to the extent, chiefly, of increasing penalties in some cases and reducing them in others.

Contrary to expectation, this second reading proved a mild sort of affair, with only one clause—that providing for disqualification of premises on a conviction—evoking any particular discussion. Albert Pinard, Liberal member for East Ottawa, raised an objection to the clause, claiming that the Government was trying to take away from citizens rights that were given them years ago. His demand that the clause be stricken from the amending bill entirely was met by the Prime Minister with the statement that the Liquor Board might well handle the situation. Mr. Pinard claimed that the board already had too much power. Mr. Ferguson then suggested that the bill be sent on to committee, when some amendment, giving the board a discretionary power, might be submitted.

**Law-breakers "Out."**

He agreed that, disqualification of an entire boarding house or rooming house—that is, placing a drinking ban on all rooms—for the misdemeanor of a single lodger might work a hardship in many cases, but he stated firmly that any proprietor caught breaking the law should be "declared out."