

Thursday - March - 28th

REQUEST FOR FIGURES ON LIQUOR OPERATION REFUSED BY DRAYTON

Speaker's Ruling Nearly De-
feated on Vote in
Committee

SOME HEATED CLASHES

Public Accounts Committee of the Legislature closed its sessional inquiry yesterday in a flare of fireworks.

Sir Henry Drayton, Chairman of the Liquor Control Board, declined to meet Liberal Leader Sinclair's request for production of a statement of revenue and expenditures for individual liquor stores throughout Ontario, on the ground that such information was not in the public interest, and that, moreover, the Statutes did not permit its publication.

Hon. Joseph E. Thompson, Chairman of the committee, ruled that Sir Henry's attitude be sustained.

Mr. Sinclair challenged the correctness of the ruling. In the vote of the committee that followed, the ruling had a narrow escape from defeat, only 17 of the 32 members in attendance polling in support of it.

Persists in Request.

The Liberal Leader's request for a statement was made last week. On his reappearance before the committee yesterday Sir Henry Drayton expressed his unwillingness to meet the demand. Mr. Sinclair persisted, in spite of the "Strong Man's" attitude, that the committee was entitled to the evidence asked. A committee which dealt with all the finances of the Province had the right, he contended, to search every dollar of revenue and expenditure.

Chairman Thompson stated that it was not "in the public interests" that the committee should go on a fishing expedition. If Mr. Sinclair had anything in view for investigation, he should outline it—should be specific.

Hon. William Finlayson, who represented the Government on the committee, took the stand that Sir Henry had taken the proper attitude. "The Liquor Control Board," he stated, "is not in the peddling business. If we publish the details that stores make so much, and that Mr. So and So gets this or that salary, we are getting it down to an entirely mercenary basis." In his belief, Mr. Sinclair sought the information as a move toward breaking down the effectiveness of the Liquor Control Act.

Finlayson-Sinclair Clash.

This, the last sitting of the committee, was not, as previously stated, without its pyrotechnical moments. While admitting that the vote of the committee closed the incident, Mr. Sinclair launched into a speech that drew from Mr. Finlayson the claim that the Liberal Leader had no right to discuss the matter again.

"I have the right," said the Liberal Leader

"You haven't," retorted Mr. Finlayson.

"I have," shot back Mr. Sinclair.

Chairman Thompson thought that Mr. Sinclair had placed himself pretty well on record before the committee, and the public as well, as to how he stood on the question, and that the affair was ended.

"Oh, let him talk," put in J. Fred Reid, Conservative member for West Windsor. "This has been a dead session."

Other Places to Say It.

Mr. Sinclair stressed the point that if he could not say what he wanted to say before the committee, there were plenty of other places in Ontario where he could say it.

"I've been stopped from saying things before this committee before," he said, heatedly, "and the public knows it."

"Pretty cheap," commented Mr. Finlayson.

"Aw, let's go," cried one committee member.

"Adjourned," called another.

Adjournment followed.

HOUSE AGAIN SPLITS ALONG PARTY LINES ON HYDRO MEASURE

Liberal Whip Makes Attack
on "Southampton"
Part of Bill—

"BOOS" FROM MEMBERS

Less than an hour after the Ontario Legislature divided on the Gas Tax amendment yesterday afternoon, the division bells were clanging again, and the Whips of the three groups were scurrying around the corridors locating members for a vote on the bill which Hon. J. R. Cooke, Hydro Commissioner, introduced to the House on Tuesday night, and which, in effect, validates certain municipal Hydro by-laws, and provides that they may not be upset.

Alex. P. Mewhinney, Liberal Whip, and member for North Bruce, led the Opposition groups in a drive of criticism against the legislation. Mr. Mewhinney took marked exception to that section in the bill which, in his belief, affected the Southampton situation. While he declared himself to be an "independent," holding no brief for either Hydro or the Foshay interests—the two contending factors in the Southampton power squabble—he held, nevertheless, that all "fair-minded members" of the House should reject the section in question, inasmuch as the Southampton differences were still before the courts.

Application Dismissed.

In spite of Premier Ferguson's explanation that the bill before the House was simply the annual Hydro bill; that the section to which the Liberal Whip referred was included in every annual measure; and that the application which had been filed at Osgoode Hall by certain Southampton interests for an injunction restraining Hydro from entering the town had been dismissed that very afternoon, Mr. Mewhinney drew support in the debate of P. W. Pearson (Liberal, North York), Aurelien Belanger (Liberal, Russell) and of his Leader, William E. N. Sinclair.

The issue, stated Mr. Sinclair, was a far greater one than the fate of the Southampton by-law. The principle involved was whether or not the courts were to be allowed to deal with issues placed before them free of embarrassing legislation. The principle, he contended, was every bit as "vicious" as Mr. Belanger had alleged.

From D. J. Taylor (Progressive, North Grey) the House had the charge that this was just a sample of "drastic steps" Premier Ferguson had promised he would take against private power interests if ever an occasion arose.

Premier Ferguson again contributed to the debate with reiteration of his stand that the twice-expressed will of the Southampton electors should not be held up by petty, vexatious technicalities, or tied up by expensive litigation. The bill before the House established no precedent, he contended. While Hydro had never made a practice of forcing itself on a community, it was determined, when the people wanted it, to do everything to protect its interests against "insidious invasion."

59-27 Victory.

The division which Liberal Leader Sinclair demanded, amid "boos" from Government members, proved a 59-27 victory for the Government. Again the house split on party lines, with Farquhar (U.F.O.) sticking by the Opposition.

Rumor which circulated the corridors in Queen's Park during the 6 o'clock recess was to the effect that the Progressives were indignant over a division being "sprung" on second reading. What they objected to in the bill was one clause alone—and not to the general principle of the measure.