

Feb. 14th.

# GOVERNMENT FLAYED ON EDUCATION PLANS AND HYDRO POLICIES

**Premier Should Make First-  
Hand Survey of Rural  
School Conditions, Free  
From Influence of Offi-  
cials, Urges C. A. Rob-  
ertson**

## PRICE IS EULOGIZED BY RUSSELL NESBITT

The expression of two divergent views featured proceedings in the Legislature when the debate in reply to the Speech from the Throne continued yesterday. And it was not unusual that there should be a divergency, for the speakers were the Liberal member from North Huron, C. A. Robertson, and the Conservative stalwart from Toronto-Bracondale, Russell Nesbitt.

Mr. Robertson, continuing the debate from Tuesday, attacked the Government particularly on educational and Hydro policies. Mr. Nesbitt, while praising the Ferguson Administration generally, voiced a eulogy of Hon. William H. Price, Attorney-General, and in this praise he recalled action when Colonel Price was Provincial Treasurer.

### Not Convinced.

In his opening remarks Mr. Robertson declared that the people of North Huron were not convinced that Government Control is a good thing, and that "no amount of eloquence will change that attitude."

Mr. Robertson declared that, while the Government proposed increased grants to Township Councils for road-building, the Government had, in 1929, defeated a move which would have accomplished that purpose.

"The Minister of Education," he stated, "told his audience in London in the early summer that it was proposed to take up two years of high school work in rural schools, but when the election got hot that was modified, and we were told that it would be optional, and the Minister became very paternal in his anxiety to keep the boys and girls at home in order to keep them away from the temptations of the urban centres. But how will it work out in actual fact?"

"One of the things we were supposed to avoid by the Township School Board was the inequality in township school rates; yet by the new suggestion that situation will be accentuated. Thus, a section with a big assessment can undertake the fifth-class work with the help of increased grants from the Government as forecast, while a weak

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section will never attempt it, as the burden is already too great."

"All schools in a municipality should have equal taxation, and the scholars equal privileges. The proposed changes are not in accord with changed conditions, any more than was the Township School Board bill.

"The Prime Minister complains of lack of constructive criticism and in order to avoid that being said of me I would suggest that before making any drastic change in our school laws, a thorough survey of the whole situation be made and by himself as Minister of Education, free from the influence of departmental heads, who may be visionary rather than practical. I am sure if the Minister will allow himself to get the rural viewpoint and study rural conditions first hand, our school troubles, both financially and academically, will be much nearer solved than they are today. I am looking forward to the amendments to be introduced and I trust they will be debated on their merits."

### Who Gave Authority?

Mr. Robertson continued to speak on the subject of Hydro development. "More aid to rural Hydro users," he stated, "was a slogan in the last campaign, but those of us who sat here last session will remember we were told that there could be no reduction in rates; that the basic principle laid down by Sir Adam Beck and by his followers, was Hydro at cost, and that we were getting it at cost. What more could we want? Yet the Prime Minister, in his Mitchell speech, forecast a reduction in the service charge, which, I think, is already in effect. The question is, who gave him authority to make such a statement, and how can that be reconciled with former statements?"

"Rural users are also promised financial aid in installing Hydro. I contend that is a very doubtful favor. In the

first place, the farmer who cannot afford to install Hydro is better without it. Hydro on the farm is desirable in more ways than one, and the farmer is entitled to it, but it is not a money-maker. It may well be called a semi-luxury.

### Rural System Wrong.

"The whole rural tax system is wrong," he declared; "what we want is reduced power rates to urban centres from which rural lines are run.

"We want our outlying towns and villages built up by receiving the same rate as charged to the great industrial centres. It is ours by all that is fair and just, and when we get that, rural rates will correspondingly decrease. Better we had a dozen cities of 50,000 population than a couple of big ones who get all the plums.

"I contend, Mr. Speaker, that the Hydro rates charged outlying towns has done more than anything else to deplete the population of the various counties.

"Hydro is not the only activity car-

ried on by the Government in which the rural municipalities suffer. Let us look at the highway costs, and the unfair burden put upon the minor municipalities.

\$260,000 for \$150,000.

"In the County of Huron we have approximately 10,000 motor vehicles and, taking the figures for 1929, the average license paid in the Province was well over \$11, and the gas tax of 5 cents amounted to an average of \$15 per motor vehicle. Thus, if my figures are correct—and I have gone to considerable trouble to verify them—the County of Huron pays in automobile and commercial vehicle licenses the sum of \$110,000, and in gas tax \$150,000, or \$260,000, while at the same time receiving back from the Government in county and township grants a little over \$150,000.

"I wish to deal with the matter of old-age pensions. Some amendments are forecast, but there is no indication that the minor municipality will be relieved of its 20 per cent. contribution. On the floor of the House last year it was said that the aid given to inmates of county homes would nearly counterbalance the 20 per cent. cost to the county, and again I must refer to county figures to prove the error of that statement.

### Out of Liquor Revenue.

"In Huron County Home 40 inmates receive a pension. If it is a full pension the contribution from the Province would be \$72 each, or \$2,880, while at the same time the 20 per cent. levy made on the county for the 400 pensioners amounts to nearly \$14,000, besides the cost of the local Pension Board; and the only method by which that can be raised is direct taxation. In our case it will require an additional 4-10 mills to meet the cost. This could very well have been met by the Government out of its liquor revenue, the proceeds of which we were told at one time were to be devoted to just such purposes."

Russell Nesbitt, Toronto-Bracondale, the Conservatives' best debate pinch-hitter—he only had a half-hour's notice to follow Mr. Robertson—spoke chiefly "on behalf of the Attorney-General," as he expressed it.

### Thinks Public Satisfied.

Mr. Nesbitt praised Colonel Price's work in connection with the recent brokerage-house clean-up, stating that he was sure that the public was satisfied with the Prime Minister's statement of Tuesday that the Government was exercising "diligent supervision" over the matter in the interests of the general public.

Mr. Nesbitt went away back to the days of the Drury Administration to find a foundation from which to launch another eulogy of Colonel Price. When, following the defeat of the U.F.O. Administration, Colonel Price was made Provincial Treasurer, he had, said Mr. Nesbitt, instituted the departmental audits that had proved so effective, not only in placing the Province's finances on a "pay-as-you-go" basis, but in recovering for the Treasury large amounts of money due it.

As head of the Soldiers' Aid Commission, Colonel Price had also done invaluable work, continued Mr. Nesbitt, in carrying relief to dependents of soldiers; and in generally reorganizing the police force of the Province he had

built up in the "Provincials," under the direction of General Williams, "one of the finest bodies of men on the American Continent."

Adjournment of the debate until Tuesday next was moved by D. J. Taylor, Progressive, on behalf of W. G. Medd, Progressive, South Huron.