

Return of Sinclair To Liberal Helm Predicted by Lyons

Pleas Made for Farmers, Debt-Free Province Is Foreseen and E. W. Beatty's Western Relief Plan Criticized in the Legislature

SHORT CLASHES DURING DEBATE

With Charles A. Robertson (Liberal, North Huron) fighting the battle of the overtaxed farmer; with Clifford Case (Conservative, North York) painting a glowing picture of the Province's present financial status, and prophesying, "in a reasonable time," the wiping out of the Provincial debt; with J. G. Taylor (Progressive, North Grey) mixing in with his appeal for abolition of the gun license and Grey's "pesky" jack-rabbits a sharp criticism of E. W. Beatty's Western Canada aid scheme and a sharper criticism of Mr. Bennett's "three-minute" tariff hearing; and with Hon. James Lyons (Conservative, Sault Ste. Marie) departing from his usual antagonistic-toward-Opposition policy to praise the Liberal House leadership of William E. N. Sinclair, and to predict his early return to the complete direction of Provincial Liberal destinies, the Ontario Legislature yesterday, in two and a half hours of debating, now torrid, now tepid, moved several steps further toward a wind-up of the first phase of its 1931 program.

To Discuss North.

Mr. Lyons will resume the debate on Tuesday next, when, it is expected, the North country, upon which he did not touch yesterday, will be fully discussed by him in respect of development and of prospects for the future.

The atmosphere of yesterday's debate continuation was generally quiet and restrained, but on one or two occasions the Opposition speakers got tangled up with Premier Henry and Hon. J. R. Cooke, Acting Hydro Commission Chairman, and the "flares" that ensued, while short-lived, brought any dozen members quickly to attention.

There were a half-dozen prophecies registered before the House, with the Sault "iron man" leading the van. Coupled with his prediction of the restoration of Mr. Sinclair to full party leadership was an equally emphatic prediction that Right Hon. Arthur Meighen soon would be back in public life.

Criticism of the policy of keeping the Departments of Education and Highways under the Premier was expressed early in his address by Mr. Robertson.

Calls for Co-operation.

Regarding the present depression, the speaker attributed its cause to conditions in Europe and the attitude of the United States. "Conditions are not improving," he declared, "despite the efforts of the Bennett Government. The

task seems stupendous for any Government. Let us be sensible; face the situation honestly, and I believe, if we co-operate with the Minister of Agriculture, who, in turn, is working in conjunction with the Federal Minister of Agriculture, that we can gradually bring about a better day for agriculture, and consequently the whole country."

Mr. Robertson launched into a vigorous criticism of the increased burden of taxation on rural Ontario, "caused by the shifting of Provincial responsibility, the ever-increasing cost of education and highways, coupled with unfair Hydro rates."

Answers Hydro Criticism.

At the outset of his remarks Mr. Case warmly defended the Government's policy in respect of agriculture, took Mr. Robertson to task, in particular, for his criticism of the Government's bonusing of rural Hydro extension. The remarkable growth of rural Hydro was amply demonstrated, he contended, in the fact that the 537 miles of line built in 1923 had increased to 6,640 miles at the present time.

Mr. Robertson protested that he had not criticized the extension scheme, but the borrowing policy that had been brought down last session to aid the farmer in the installation of Hydro service equipment. Mr. Case still submitted that the Government's policy, all round, had done wonders to help the farmer.

"Champion of Agriculture."

Mr. Taylor began his address with a stinging attack on Premier Bennett's "three-minute" tariff hearing. "And this was the man," said Mr. Taylor, "who campaigned the country only last year as a champion of agriculture." Scorning Mr. Case's claims that "brighter prospects" existed for agriculture, Mr. Taylor said that, while he was "no pessimist," he could see very few high spots in the world today for the mixed farmer.

Further criticism Mr. Taylor brought to bear on the E. W. Beatty Western loan scheme, claiming that it would not only throw the West in an unfair direct competition with this part of the country, but would add, further, a load to the West, already overburdened by debt.

Reiteration of an old plea for the absorption by the Government of the whole cost of Provincial highways, and the mention in this connection of the road between Meaford and Owen Sound, brought the North Grey member, for a few minutes, into a spirited clash with Premier Henry.

That stretch—at least six miles of its paving—had, he had heard, cost about \$52,000 a mile. Mr. Henry pointed out that the road in question did not represent a true picture of road-building in Ontario, inasmuch as it had required rock ballasting. Further criticism from Mr. Taylor brought the Premier to his feet again with the remark that several sessions ago he (Mr. Taylor) had complained that because he did not sit on the Conservative side of the House his constituency wasn't getting very much from the Government. "Now," added the Prime Minister, "he is saying we are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars there."

Only on Eve of Election.

Mr. Taylor countered with the statement that his former argument had been that his riding would get nothing done until the eve of an election. "And that was what happened," said he. "And there was some arrangement, too, about laborers, whom it took myself and a Judge and several others considerable time to keep off the lists."

Mr. Henry—I trust my honorable friend is not trying to suggest that we built that 18 miles of pavement at a cost of \$50,000 a mile. He knows that there was not \$900,000 spent on that stretch.

Mr. Taylor stated that he had not always approved of a 100 per cent. absorption by the Government of the cost of Provincial highways, but he felt, in the face of the farming and general business depression, that if the Government could increase its liquor profits in some way the increase might well be applied to relieving the municipalities of the 20 per cent. they now pay to the Provincials.

Mr. Henry—You then approve of the Government being in the liquor business?

Should Get More Revenue.

Mr. Taylor—I don't say that. What I do say is that, now you're in it, I believe that you should get considerably more revenue for the expenditures you make.

The North Grey member told the House that his criticism of rural Hydro was not applied to the bonus scheme, but to the borrowing arrangement instituted last session to provide for installation. What sum, said he, turning to Hon. J. R. Cooke, Acting Hydro Chairman, had been borrowed to date? How many farmers had taken advantage of the arrangement?

Mr. Cooke—If, of the 10,000 customers we had last year, only a small proportion took advantage of the borrowing, will my honorable friend accept it as an indication that the tale of woe he has been unfolding regarding the farmer is a bit exaggerated?

Mr. Taylor—If the borrowings were small, it would show, I say, that our average farmer's intelligence is pretty high.

Hon. H. C. Nixon—That will hold him for a while.

In conclusion, Mr. Taylor advocated the abolition of the gun license.

Congratulates Sinclair.

Hon. James Lyons congratulated Mr. Sinclair on his speech, and on his loyalty to his party as shown by his continuing to lead the Liberal members in this House after the selection of another Provincial Leader by the convention. "While Mr. Sinclair has always been a real fighter in this House," he said, "he has always fought fair."

Not Real Liberal Feeling.

"I don't believe for a moment," declared Mr. Lyons, "that the Liberal convention represented real Liberal feeling when it selected a new Leader to succeed Mr. Sinclair. That is demonstrated by the fact that the present Liberal members of the House are following Mr. Sinclair's leadership. The present 'proxy' Leader will never have an opportunity to sit in the House as Leader. If he ever does contest a seat, he will be left outside. I have no quarrel with the method of the Liberal convention in choosing its Leader, but I expect that before the next election the present House Leader will be the recognized Leader of his party both within and without the House. Evidently there has been a change of heart already among Liberals since the convention. Few of the prominent Liberals at that convention took part in the two recent by-elections."