

other part of the obligations of these Commissions."

Speaking of the debt-retirement plan, Mr. Nixon said: "The weakness and absolute certainty of failure of this whole scheme is that, as the new debt accumulates at an average of \$26,000,000 per year over and above what is paid off, the requirements from ordinary revenue to meet the demands will be simply prohibitive, and the debt of the Province has already reached such alarming proportions that, with the example of Australia before us as what can happen to a country when debt is allowed to pile up, uncontrolled for a few years, I, in all sincerity, submit that the time has arrived, in fact passed, when this Province should set its house in order and stop this everlasting debt growth."

"Then, also, I cannot see that it was in the public interest to buy out all these power developments—Dominion Power and Transmission, Foshay interests, Wannapitae, and so on. These developments were already made, had been giving very satisfactory service, and a little independent competition doesn't do the Hydro any harm."

Mr. Cooke Replies.

Living in such a wealthy district as Brant, it was easy to talk about hard times, said Mr. Cooke in his opening remarks. There were thousands of persons, however, who found their burden of taxation too great for them, and the Department of Education was making a real and honest effort to relieve this burden.

Replying to S. C. Tweed (Liberal, Waterloo North), Liberal financial critic, Mr. Cooke said that there was no basis for his criticism that \$63,000,000 had been withdrawn from the Timiskaming & Northern Ontario Railway last year.

Mr. Cooke at this point dealt briefly with the sale of liquor in Ontario, and said that there was no comparison between the Quebec system of free sale and the Ontario restrictive policy. The cost of administration of control was one of the reasons why Ontario had to bring her liquor prices in line with those of the other Provinces.

Debt Retirement.

Mr. Cooke then dealt with debt retirement and pointed out that the plan which would retire the debt within twenty years dealt only with the debt which existed at the time the plan came into force. A very creditable showing had been made by this Government, said Mr. Cooke. No Provincial Treasurer was ever entitled to more credit than Hon. W. H. Price, who, when he held that portfolio, originated and introduced this scheme of debt retirement.

The Minister then turned to the matter of power, and said that during the past four years the Ontario Hydro-Electric Power Commission had acquired various properties. There were four independent sources of power in Quebec, and he defended the purchase of power from these sources.

Rural Power Lines.

On the question of rural Hydro extension, the Minister stated that prior to 1923 only 500 miles of rural line had existed, and these had not been rural lines in the real meaning of the word. Since then the growth of rural extension had been the most remarkable in the history of the world. At times last summer, explained he, the Hydro was building as many as ten miles of line per day. This meant that factories in the Province were rolling thirty miles of wire a day, 400 to 500 miles of poles were being got out, transformers were being erected, and a substantial contribution was being made by the expansion toward easing the unemployment situation. There had been some criticism in the House of rural extension, he said, and year after year it had come from practically the same sources. The members for the Greys, Farquhar Oliver (U.F.O.) and J. J. Taylor (Progressive), and the member for Dufferin, T. K. Slack (Progressive), had, he contended, been outstanding in this respect. Inquiries into their districts had informed him, he said, that in Grey there were only 152 rural subscribers, and in Dufferin only

fifty-nine rural subscribers.

"Conditions in these counties," asserted Mr. Cooke, "are equal to conditions, I would say, in any other county. The land is just as good. The people are as well to do and as intelligent. It is pretty hard to explain the difference, then, with regard to their rural power consumption, except that it may be because of the leadership of their members and the information they carry back to them."

Defining the "remarkable manner" in which Hydro pays its way, Mr. Cooke cited as parallel cases that of the City of Toronto, and that of the hamlet of Stirling in his own constituency. In Toronto, with some 65,000 consumers, assets had been provided for the purpose of supplying power that approximated \$100,000,000. In Stirling, the home of some 800 people, \$10,000 had been borrowed five years ago to erect a distributing system. Since then that borrowing had been paid off, extensions costing \$12,000 had been made, a \$10,000 Hydro office had been built, and at the present time the little municipality had some \$12,000 in the bank.

Replies to Liberals.

Getting down to the recent Liberal Opposition criticism of the Hydro's policy, Mr. Cooke declared that such statements as Dr. McQuibban's assertions to the effect that Hydro was shrouded with secrecy, that the great principles of Beck and Whitney had been rent asunder, that the whole enterprise was playing into the hands of private development had never been heard in the House before. Whether, he added, Dr. McQuibban was speaking his own mind or the carefully prepared statement of others, "it was most unfortunate," said the Hydro Chairman, "that a man should try to speak with assurance on things on which he has been very ill-informed."

Dr. McQuibban had, he contended, "a wonderful imagination." Referring to the Liberal member's detailed explanation of the Beauharnois prospectus—a prospectus in which the Beauharnois had advertised the fact they were going to supply Ontario with power, Mr. Cooke declared that Dr. McQuibban had asked: "What right has Beauharnois to do such a thing?" "Well," Mr. Cooke continued, "I don't know what right they have. Beauharnois is a private company. What I'm concerned with is how we can provide power for the people of this Province."

Assailing Dr. McQuibban's charges that the Province was sick to death of Hydro's "full-dress parade of speeches" and that it was time that the Commission's chest should be thrown back and the "skeleton" laid bare, the Hydro Chairman, heatedly, observed that Dr. McQuibban had had considerable temerity in speaking of things of which he knew no more than the average child one might meet going down the street.

Calls for Order.

"Order, order," cried Liberal Leader Sinclair.

Mr. Cooke went on.

Mr. Sinclair—Mr. Speaker, couldn't the honorable member be called to order.

Mr. Cooke—What do you want me to explain.

Mr. Sinclair—You can't say that—about knowing no more than a babe.

Mr. Cooke—I'm speaking of having no more knowledge—intimate understanding of the question.

When the flare-up subsided, Mr. Cooke proceeded to deal with what he termed his critic's inferences that the contracts into which Hydro had entered were "not worth the money" and that too much had been ventured.

"I might recall something from history in this connection," declared Mr. Cooke, "and point out that if no risks had been taken the cliffs of Dover would still mark the outer boundaries of the British Empire. If the Hydro

had not taken a risk in purchasing the Ontario Power Company, the Electric Development Company, and had not put \$18,000,000 into the Chippawa development, the municipalities of this Province would not be in the fortunate position in which they find themselves today."

At some length, the speaker dealt with the purchase of the Dominion Power and Transmission Company at Hamilton; referred to the negotiations which the Commission has under way toward the sale of company subsidiaries—negotiations which, when consummated, will net \$6,875,000—and made it perfectly patent that in his opinion the Hydro should operate for the development and distribution of energy alone.

In belligerent mood Mr. Cooke denied Liberal Opposition accusations that the Hydro had departed from the policy of Sir Adam Beck.

"Such statements are not true," said Mr. Cooke, "and I want to prove it here tonight, in Sir Adam's own handwriting."

When he went on the Hydro Commission in 1923, said Mr. Cooke, the first thing he had to consider, along with his associates, was the purchase of outside power. Sir Adam could see then, submitted Mr. Cooke, that Niagara was not going to last forever. Under consideration was the purchase of 250,000 h.p. from Quebec at \$15 per h.p.

Mr. Cooke quoted letters of Sir Adam from the documents of the Commission to show that the great Hydro champion's policy was still the policy of today. "These documents," he challenged, "are open to every member of the House if they desire to see them, and to the press of the Province, too."

Georgian Bay Power.

Referring to the old "Georgian Bay" attempted power steal, Mr. Cooke claimed that it was no \$15 power price (a price criticized by the Liberals now), but a \$19 demand which the proponents of that Dominion bill wanted if their demands went through. "If those people," said he, "could have so established themselves as to demand \$19, an additional extra revenue of some \$4,000,000 would have gone their way. It was the most gigantic scheme ever sought to be presented in connection with private interests."

Mr. Cooke told how the Hydro Commission had gone to the then Premier of the Province, Hon. G. Howard Ferguson, and had asked him to protest against the Georgian Bay Canal Bill; how Mr. Ferguson had brought a resolution before the House, and how, when put to a vote, "only one member of the House voiced a protest against the resolution."

"If you doubt my assertion, get a copy of The Globe (reading date); you will find it all there."

"Perhaps he (Liberal Leader Sinclair)," said Mr. Cooke, "was afraid of what might happen. His own party was then in power at Ottawa. He may protest today of his love for Hydro, but, I fear, he loves his political party more."

Mr. Cooke, toward the conclusion of his address, dealt with the position of local Hydro plants. Under the statutes, he said, not one dollar of these properties could go to the Province. The \$360,000,000 in assets must ultimately revert to the municipalities. The Government, he concluded, would loyally observe every pledge and undertaking ever given to the municipalities.