

April 2

Highways Advisory Committee To Study All Road Taxation

Premier George S. Henry announced to the Legislature in the closing hours of its sessional wind-up early this (Thursday) morning that the Highways Advisory Committee of the Province, of which Thomas J. Mahony, M.P.P., South Wentworth, is Chairman, would be asked by the Government this year to make a study of the whole question of road taxation, from the standpoint of the cities, as well as the standpoint of the rural municipalities.

"This advisory board has done good work in the past, and I'm sure it will be able to do good work in this connection," the Premier stated.

At the present time James F. Hill, M.P.P., East Hastings, and Mr. Mahony comprise the committee. There is one vacancy on it, due to the elevation to Cabinet rank last fall of Colonel T. L. Kennedy, M.P.P., Peel.

It is likely, before the committee commences its inquiry, that this vacancy will be filled.

entire costs of the system. But, added the Health Minister, if the time arrived when the Dominion authorities would agree to pay one-third of such costs, the Ontario Government no doubt would seriously consider the question of contributing likewise.

Dr. Robb did not decri, but, on the other hand, paid tribute to, the good work done by the part-time medical officers whose administrative authority the county units would wipe out. Still, he did intimate there were heavy expenditures and overlapping of duties obtaining under the present system of health operation that could be cut down.

Although he did not say so to the Legislature, it is likely that the bill

sponsoring establishment of the county units will be reintroduced next session—after the general public has

had, during the interim, adequate opportunity to familiarize itself with its aims.

All Lawmaking Processes Are Completed, Except Formal Ceremonies, When Lieutenant-Governor Gives Assent to Bills Enacted Into Law

GAS-PRICE DISPUTE ENLIVENS DEBATES

Business of the second session of Ontario's Eighteenth Legislature wound up at 1.52 o'clock this (Thursday) morning. Formal prorogation by his Honor William D. Ross, Lieutenant-Governor of the Province, is set for 3 o'clock this afternoon amid all the time-honored pomp and ceremony.

Announcement by Premier Henry of the personnel of the special committee of the House which will sit during the interim to study the Municipal Act, with a view to recommending any consolidations and amendments which, in their opinion, may be necessary, featured the closing minutes of the 1931 deliberations. This committee will comprise, in addition to the Premier, Hon. William Finlayson, Minister of Lands and Forests; Hon. Dr. Paul Poisson, Minister without portfolio; G. H. Challies, Conservative, Dundas; F. W. Elliott, Liberal, North Bruce; Arthur Ellis, Conservative, South Ottawa; Thomas Jutten, Conservative, Centre Hamilton; Fred G. McBrien, Conservative, Toronto-Brockton; and T. K. Slack, Progressive, Dufferin. The committee will report back as soon after the recess as can be reasonably expected of it.

Mr. Slack Absent.

The last item on the order paper to be called by Mr. Henry was the motion standing in the name of Mr. Slack, appealing for a reduction, not only in the salaries of Cabinet Ministers and highly paid Civil servants, but in the sessional indemnities of all members, as well. Inasmuch as Mr. Slack was not in his seat at the calling of the motion, it was declared out of order, and the House promptly moved to adjournment.

Features of this session which began on Feb. 12, were the absence of the sparkle of the former Premier, Hon. G. Howard Ferguson; the collaboration of the Liberal Party with the Government in taking action to improve the conditions of farming and the farmer; the non-calling of the Public Accounts Committee; the unusual amount of legislation, both of Government and of a private nature, that was introduced.

Probably the most contentious piece of legislation discussed outside the

House as well as in it, was Hon. Charles McCrea's game law amendment providing for partial abolition in this Province of the use of dogs in the hunting of deer. To Attorney-General William H. Price fell the honor of bringing down the most far-reaching legislation, having to do with the Judicature Act and the Security Frauds Prevention Act.

An outstanding event of the session was the debate on the allegations of "Practical Atheism" in the University of Toronto, and a suggestion that the situation be cleared up before grants be voted for university purposes.

The contentious barbers bill—a measure which would have provided, among other things, a system of Provincial registration and licensing,—was withdrawn in the closing hours of the session.

Much Business to Cover.

At 12.30 at least two or three more hours of deliberation would be required to write finish to the 1931 Legislature program. Many of the main estimates had still to be voted; a very contentious resolution, sponsored by T. K. Slack (Progressive, Dufferin), calling for cuts in Cabinet Ministers and other official salaries and a reduction in members' indemnities was still on the order paper to be called; and one or two of the Ministers of the Government had yet, it is reported, to speak, if briefly, with regard to the policies of their respective departments.

Claiming that the Henry Government had just as much right and was just as much duty-bound to step into gasoline wars and bread wars as it had to interfere with and fix rates in the present threatening natural gas war in Western Ontario, Hon. Harry C. Nixon, Progressive Leader, took strong exception in the Legislature last night to Hon. Charles McCrea's new gas-controlling legislation, and inferred that enactment and operation of the same would lose consumers considerable benefit that otherwise they would enjoy.

The bill received second reading, and later was endorsed in committee and given third reading.

Says Government Rushes In.

Mr. Nixon's objection came as Mr. McCrea moved second reading of his legislation. "It is rather amusing," he said, "to view the concern of this Government, when either by circumstances or competition, consumers have a chance to benefit by lowered prices." Recently he stated he had approached the Minister of Agriculture, and had asked him whether or not in view of the great spread in milk prices between the producer and the consumer he could not step in and set a fair price, but the Minister had merely thrown up his hands "in horror" at the suggestion. "But in

this natural gas war, when we as consumers have a chance to get some cheap product," he added, "the Government doesn't hesitate a single second to rush in and set a price."

There was no reason that he could see, he said, why the Minister of Mines should be so concerned. Gasoline companies had wars, and the price dropped very low some times. Bread companies staged wars, and the price dropped to a few cents a loaf. "May I ask the Minister," said he, "if he is going to step in, in these cases?"

"It all depends on the circumstances," replied Mr. McCrea.

"The Government is stepping hard," continued Mr. Nixon, "why shouldn't it be done in the other cases?"

Different, Says Premier.

Premier Henry at this juncture interjected the argument that the question of something that was delivered from a wagon, like milk, for instance, was not comparable with delivery of a product from a pipeline.

Criticism, if of a milder nature, was also directed at Mr. McCrea's legislation by William E. N. Sinclair, Liberal House Leader, who raised strong objection to a clause which would have given the Gas Referee the right, as he defined it "to make an order without consulting anybody," and who had the satisfaction of having the Government modify the clause to his way of liking.

Referring to the Government's argument that one of the main points of the McCrea bill was to avoid duplication of gas service in a community, at the expense, ultimately, of the consumer, Mr. Sinclair argued that if there was no duplication, a monopoly would naturally be created. "In my mind," he added, "this legislation is more in the interests of the company than it is in the interests of the individual. I trust the Minister will handle the question in a humane manner, for some of the powers he is asking us to legislate under the Referee are most drastic and dictator-like."

By way of explanation of his legislation and amplification of the newspaper interpretations of Wednesday, Mr. McCrea stated that it would give the Government more power to control any situation in the Province of Ontario which may have far-reaching effects as a gas war. "You may have observed in the press," said he, "announcement made of a gas war, and of attempts by rival companies to invade territory where gas, either natural or artificial, was being served."

The bill, he added, would prevent duplication in any municipality of gas lines or meters without the consent of