

Feb. 17.

# Nixon Supports Liberal Thrust; To Be No "Fishing Expedition," Defiant Premier Tells House

## Deploing Insufficiency of Commission, Oppo- sition House Leader Presents Want-of-Con- fidence Motion for Fail- ure of Government to Refer Aird Payment to Inquiry

### MAGUIRE, MEIGHEN UNDER CRITICISM

## Objection Is Raised to Partyism on Hydro Board and Retirement of Two Members De- manded—"Innocent and Unsuspecting" Mr. Cooke Also Is Target

No "two-reference" Royal Commission inquiry on Hydro is going to satisfy the elected Liberal members of the Ontario Legislature.

William E. N. Sinclair, K.C., their Leader, made that perfectly plain to a crowded Legislature, yesterday afternoon, when, in continuing the Address debate, he deplored the insufficiency of the Commission under which Mr. Justice Middleton was now acting; demanded from the Government a new Commission of three Judges, with adequate counsel, and moved a want of confidence amendment condemning the Henry Administration for failure to refer the \$125,000 Aird-Beauharnois payment to the present probe, along with no less than seven power contracts into which the Hydro has entered within the last five years.

#### Has Mr. Nixon's Support.

Mr. Sinclair's amendment, coming after a restrained but redoubtable speech, had the effect of forestalling the proposed Nixon amendment on the Aird-Beauharnois matter, but, nevertheless, won from the Progressive Leader, and his followers their endorsement and support.

Standing on the common ground of general public belief that more light should be turned on Hydro than now obtains, the Liberal House Leader and Hon. H. C. Nixon carried warm battle to the Government and its present-day attitude. Mr. Sinclair ranged his attack from a demand for an enforced retirement from the Hydro Commission of C. Alfred Maguire and Right Hon. Arthur Meighen because of their apparent Conservatism down to sharp criticism of the Hydro's purchases of large blocks of power, even after the 1929 stock-market crash, when it was recognized, he said, that the country would have to go slow on expenditures for a long time.

#### Clean-up Demanded.

Mr. Nixon varied his assault from contention that if John Aird Jr. swore falsely before the Beauharnois Committee the Attorney-General of Ontario had a "very definite duty to perform," to the compelling reminder that the uncontradicted allegations now sweeping the country—that power, for instance, is now being delivered to the Commission in excess of requirements, and sold back for a fraction of the cost; that millions of dollars have been paid by the Hydro for alleged assets that are in reality "worse than scraps or junk"—must be cleared up this session if the House has to sit until midsummer.

Both Leaders were forcibly critical of the methods employed by the Government in appointing the present Middleton Commission. That the appointment had been sprung, almost on the eve of the Legislature opening, so as to render sub judice in the House the matters referred for inquiry, was their contention.

#### That \$125,000 Payment.

Both Leaders were also bold in their condemnation of the failure to include the \$125,000 Aird payment in the references, with Mr. Nixon particularly outspoken in this connection.

"If Aird," said Mr. Nixon, "put it 'all over' Swezey (as the Premier says he did) to the tune of \$125,000, what must he have done to my honorable friend, the innocent and unsuspecting farmer (Hon. J. R. Cooke, Hydro Chairman) from the hard scramble of North Hastings, when the tune was only \$50,000 (Madawaska payment)? If Aird gave satisfactory service for value received in the one case why shouldn't we assume that he did so in the other? The two are so closely coordinated that I do not see why the Commissioner should exclude the one in dealing with the other."

#### Mr. Sinclair Speaks.

"I hardly think there will be an election this year; I hardly think the Government is in the suicide class. But I do think a wise thing for the Government would be for it to tell you straight that there will be no election this troublous year," said Mr. Sinclair, in his speech. He recalled that he had urged economy, of which today there is so much talk, under Premiers Whitney, Drury, Ferguson and Henry, and had "been held at ridicule at all times."

He urged also that the Government bills be presented as early as possible, so that it might be possible for the members to study them for some days. "Only in case of grave necessity should Government bills be introduced late in the session," he said, recalling that last session forty-one bills were introduced in the last eight days, which, he said, did not allow the members time to give them proper consideration.

#### "This is a people's institution," Mr.

Sinclair said, urging the retirement from the Hydro Commission of Right Hon. Senator Meighen. "I would say he should resign, and in his place there should be an outstanding non-partisan man to inspire confidence in Hydro and get away from the political slant."

#### "Conservatism Creeping In."

Mr. Sinclair said that Conservatism was apparently creeping in the Hydro Commission, and the only impression which the public could form was that it was a Conservative Commission. He stated that the Chairman of the Commission is a member of the Government, who "takes his place with the rest of them in political fights"; that "Alfred Maguire says he is no longer a Liberal, and apparently shows it"; and that Right Hon. Arthur Meighen is "now Leader of the Conservative Party in the Senate, and of necessity must be in the political battle." He said, further, of Senator Meighen that "if he doesn't fight political battles every day he loses his job."

"This makes a pretty militant Conservative line-up for the Hydro Commission," he declared. "I suggest that Mr. Meighen should resign from the Commission—although not in any personal way—as he will have to be at Ottawa four or five months in the year, and, if he can be away that length of time, there is no need for three Commissioners. If he can have four or five months away from the Commission, what is the need of having some one else on the Commission? It looks as if an honorarium were being paid where there is no work to be done."

#### Challenge to Mr. Maguire.

Hydro Commissioner Maguire was challenged by the Liberal Leader to produce one of the briefs to which he (Mr. Maguire) made reference in his speech some days ago, and added that the Commissioner had admitted his error in his charges regarding the Liberal attitude at the last session by failing to make any reply.

"John Aird Jr. says that he got the \$125,000 not as a political contribution, but as commission on a Hydro contract," Mr. Sinclair said. "If it was so, who sent Mr. Aird to negotiate the deal?" Mr. Sinclair read the evidence of both Mr. Swezey and Mr. Griffith, both of whom stated that the money was paid to Aird as a political contribution.

"The evidence of Swezey has been taken as correct in all other political contributions, and the only exception was in the Aird case," he went on, stating that it was shown that Swezey had made political contributions, and the committee had adopted his evidence as true. Aird, he continued, admitted he got \$125,000, saying it was commission on the Hydro contract. He could not, Mr. Sinclair averred, be working for Hydro unless employed by it.

#### Situation Analyzed.

"Aird says he told Swezey he could help him get the Hydro contract," he went on. "How could he do so without instructions from Hydro as to price, etc.? If Aird's story is true, he must have been employed and instructed by Hydro, and therefore Hydro is involved. If Aird constituted himself an agent for Hydro, then he would have to take back his report to Hydro for confirmation, and again Hydro would be involved. So, Hydro—according to Aird's evidence—holds the secret of the truth or falsity of the Aird claims. The Government will not allow an investigation, so the Aird-Hydro arrangement must remain in the dark for the present, if there was such an arrangement. The Aird statements stand uncorroborated unless Hydro comes to his aid. If Hydro comes to his aid, it becomes involved, and an investigation is warranted."